

THE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WIRE

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***Automating
the beat***
from New Orleans
to Düsseldorf

Augustus Pablo
Dread at the controls

***John Paul
Jones's***
jukebox

Ectomorph

Joe Gallivan

FX Randomiz

On record

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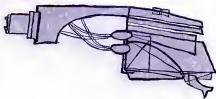


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THE WIRE

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editor's idea

It's an eerily still summer night in South London. There is no other sound in the room, no background interference from bleed-in through windows which open out onto a deserted scrap of communal inner city green space, but even so, I have to turn the volume up to Warp Factor ten, and clamp the headphones tight over the ears in order to register any evidence of musical activity on the CD currently spinning violently inside the Discman.

Is there a problem here? Has there been a technical error somewhere, at the mastering stage, perhaps? Was a button inadvertently punched which dropped the levels below the threshold of human hearing? These are important questions for a critic to ask, part of the process of covering one's back, as Richard Williams will tell you. Back in the early '70s, Williams wrote in earnest about the pressing plant test-tone on the B side of a promotional copy of a single by John Lennon and Yoko Ono, discussing it as if it were a crucial component in the couple's post-Beatles ascent into art music heaven — and he is still living it down. So you'll forgive me for winking out and registering a caveat here before going in with the analysis.

The CD in question is titled *Benlithung* and has been issued by the Italian Frings label in a limited edition run of 400 copies. Packaged in a sleeve of heavy manila cardstock paper that makes it look like an invitation to the opening of a new white cube art gallery, it archives two live performances recorded in 1996-97 in Graz, Austria and Bremen, Germany by a trio consisting of violinist Phil Durrant, trombonist Radu Malfatti and analogue synthesizer player Thomas Lehn. Played back through high-end speakers at standard volume settings, it sounds like 50 minutes of utter silence. Even with the headphones plugged in, the ambience is punctuated by the trestle episodes of peripheral rattle 'n' hum. All grist to the post-Cagean mill, you might say, except the way I (stran) to hear it, this music has little to do with conceptual art. Instead, *Benlithung* is one of the most extreme examples yet of musicians turning music into a rogue branch of microscopy.

The reason I think the CD is supposed to sound like a recording of cells dividing is because it has been mastered by Werner Diefedecker. As a member of the peripatetic electroacoustic improvising unit Polwechsel,

Diefedecker has conducted his own investigations into microscopic worlds using a multi-instrumentation of double bass, guitar and live electronics. Like *Benlithung*, Polwechsel's latest recording, *Polwechsel 2* on the Swiss label hatjnowART, contains performances characterised by chains of infinitesimal events and activity. At this level, music is transformed into what Michael Prime refers to as cellular radar: musicians become protozoan, the CD is a petri-dish, headphones take on the properties of electron-enhanced magnifying devices. The power is on, and previously hidden and unknown realms are suddenly revealed in tones of vivid technicolour.

The origins of this kind of sonic microbiology lie deep in diverse seedbeds: particle physics and subatomic theory, environmental recordings and bioacoustic studies, free improvisation and the dusty ghetto of metamusic. This month, if you had a mind to, you could trace the emergence of the petri-dish as a viable arena for musical activity via a number of recent CD releases, including *Benlithung* and *Polwechsel 2*, but also *Dynamics Of The Impromptu* on the Entropy label, which contains six ichthy-scratchy improvisations recorded live in London in 1973-74 by a trio of Derek Bailey, John Stevens and Trevor Watts, and *Moss Of Tenderness*, a new release on Ralf Wehowsky's *Selektion* label by the Los Angeles based sound artist Brandon LaBelle in the sleeveless essay that accompanies his CD. LaBelle discusses his approach to sound as an "extension of phenomenological experience, and the act of recording an attempt to inscribe it".

From almost any perspective, the ideas represented on these recordings seem so marginalised, so specific, so sealed inside a world of hermetic enquiry. So why bother? Three reasons. First, they engage the senses, as David Howell writes in this month's In Brief Electronica column, partly in reference to the metamusic of AMM, "you leave these works with ears recalibrated, wide awake and hypersensitive to the soundworld around you." Second, in the age of capital they are political dynamite, models of democratic, non-hierarchical systems of organisation, holistic instances of how we might better integrate ourselves in a multi-bred world. And third, and without exception, they sound fantastic — when they sound at all, that is. **TONY HERRINGTON**

The October issue of The Wire will be on sale: **Tuesday 28 September**

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letters

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Share and Cher alike

First, I'd like to thank you all for deeming my work worthy of inclusion in your fine magazine, the only magazine I ever read, and the only music publication, as far as I can glean, that still exists for the right reasons — enthusiasm for contemporary and historically relevant music, whatever style or form it takes. Congratulations, and I wish you continued future success.

On another note, I'd like to point out a felicitous error in Ian Penman's transcription of my interview (*The Wire* 185). The highlighted quote — "I'm revolted by people baring their problems in public and feeling this need to quote Cher, which is like smelling someone's armpits" — should have read, "feeling this need to, quote, 'share' [unquoted], which is like wanting to smell someone's armpits".

To this I can only add that to be in the close vicinity of Cher's armpits might likely be an overwhelmingly dizzying and pleasant olfactory narcotic.

Michael Gira San Francisco, USA

Wire Tapper 4: The Reckoning

I hate you. All of you, each one of you, from the editor to the last contributor. Since that very unfortunate day I decided to subscribe to *The Wire*, over five years ago, my shelves have been slowly crammed with CDs and my bank account is by now deep in deficit. And now here we go with the latest of *The Wire Tapper* discs (Vol. 4, *The Wire* 186). Full of incredibly beautiful music created by — to me — hardly known people. Another stab in an already heavily bleeding wound. That means I will start searching and buying their stuff with no control over my spending limits. Never mind, the aural pleasure that I will derive will compensate the cold rights I'll end up spending under a canal bridge, tucked under a wet cardboard box (I hope to be able to save at least my

CDs from the upcoming personal bankrupt...)

Also, Andrew Brooks's letter ("Ugly rumour", same issue) made me think: perhaps you have to be ugly to listen to interesting music as well as making it. I never thought of it before. And by looking at myself in the mirror, I get confirmation of this theory. In actual fact all the (few) people I know that have similar music tastes to mine are quite disgusting to look at. Maybe we have here a topic for a massive psychological tome: the intricate relationship between exterior appearance and artistic and cultural preferences. Better leave this daunting task to people like Ben Watson or David Toop.

David Lissena Chester

Just a wish. After receiving another excellent *Wire Tapper* CD (Vol. 4, *The Wire* 186), and reading another *Primer* (Japanese Psychedelia, same issue), why don't you combine the CDs you send us with your *Primers*? A Tropicalismo, Beatheart, Sun Ra, Jap, etc CD accompanying each *Primer* would make them even more readable. If that could be

Jonas Grönqvist Stockholm, Sweden

'Brooke no argument

In his interview with Tony Oxley (*The Wire* 186), Ben Watson parenthetically refers to Joseph Holbrooke (1878-1958), "a forgotten Cockney composer", after whom Oxley, Derek Bailey and Gavin Bryars named their 1960s trio. Firstly, Holbrooke was not a Cockney, unless of course the sound of Bow bells can be heard from Craydon, and more importantly he is not forgotten. Neglected, certainly. Three CDs featuring some of his principal works are available on the Marco Polo label, plus a couple of pages on the Net (www.homeservers.prestel.co.uk/holbrooke/holbrook.htm) for those wishing to know a little more about this prolific and sometimes eccentric composer.

Chris Blackford Basingstoke

To quote from Derek Bailey's book, *Improvisation: Its Nature And Practice In Music*: "Joseph (sometimes Josef) Holbrooke, once described as 'the Cockney Wagner', was a composer of prodigious output who, although creating something of a stir in his own lifetime, has been almost totally ignored since" — Ed

Chinese water torture

A small observation on the AMM-Comeback Cardew reference in Blaz Bargeld's Invisible Jukebox (*The Wire* 186). And this is not meant in any way to labour what is

after all a minute point of detail but — at the time of the recording in question (April/May 1966), Cardew was not a Marxist. He was, then, distinctly non-political — maybe even anti-political. The implication is that his Marxist politics informed the music in question. Obviously this was not so. The drip, drip of incorrect information distorts the general picture.

Eddie Prevost Matchless Records, Matching Tyne

Anywhere but there

You might want to tell Philip Sherburne (*Global Ear*, *The Wire* 186) that it was Oakland, California, some 600 miles north of Los Angeles, about which it was "famously said" that "there's no there there". The famous sayer was Gertrude Stein, and what she was actually referring to was the corner on which she lived: she grew up in had stood. Seeing it empty, she uttered the famous words which have been used thereafter by snooty San Franciscans to tar Oakland. But hell, a good lede is hard to come up with sometimes.

Ed Ward via e-mail

Voice of dissent

Thanks for the article on Piano Magic (*The Wire* 186), but how can you cite "Wrong French" and "Bad Patient" as being two shining examples of their work without mentioning (vocals) Rachel Leigh? I think she deserves more credit than just "that same doll voice".

Michael Kemp Brighton

Hustle for Hassell

I couldn't but disagree more with Ken Hollings on Jon Hassell's latest release, *Ascomana* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 186). I know *The Wire* likes to knock sacred cows (Rubber — Ed), but you could at least have done it in one of those black boxes and with a bit of historical context, eg the artist was hugely influential, first release in five years, etc. How does a release get a little black box anyway?

Colin Buttner via e-mail

New zeal

I can only agree with Sybilla Pootman's comment (Letters, *The Wire* 185) about her enthusiasm for New Zealand music and *The Wire* magazine. It is quite astonishing what a wealth of great musicians we have in this country — given that there are only 3.5 million people. This again makes it particularly difficult for many



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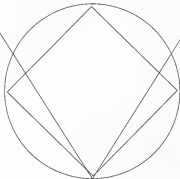
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to get the recognition they deserve. Peter Dinklage is surely one of our 'hidden treasures' — his albums are now re-released on Ajax Records and Drunken Fish (At Swim Two Birds). Other than that, I can recommend everything on Flying Nun and the small but very fine Rattle Records. Records of HDU (High Dependency Unit) represent some of our fine new bands — and don't forget to listen to Chris Knox!

Each time I pick up a *Wire* magazine I get jealous about the wonderful music festivals all over the planet — we are mostly bypassed. Could it be that the record companies feel sorry for us sometimes? There are many Australia/New Zealand-only editions with additional tracks available (last seen on the Tom Waits album), but those guys never turn up.

Rail Schmidt Auckland, New Zealand

All Fugged up

Bongwater's "Reageneration" an imitation of The Pogues (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 1B4)? Rubbish. This inspired song was written by Yui Kuperberg, a founder of The Fugs, one of the best bands of the 60s (nudging questions of technical ability aside). It sounds nothing like The Pogues, who were never more than a third-rate rip-off of The Dubliners/Clancys in any case. You Lameys always manage to get everything wrong when writing about anything American. Give it up.

Jon Swift Baltimore, USA

Age of Empire

Re-reading May's issue of *The Wire* (1B3) and noting from Chris Sharp's review that I would otherwise "miss out on some of the most uncompromisingly virulent electronic noise of the year", I decided to satisfy my aural needs by purchasing Atan Teenage Riot's *60 Second Wire Out*.

We are warned that those from "the fatalistic self-absorbed ghetto of the arthouse" might find the record "cartoonish, juvenile, simplistic or just plain stupid". I have just checked outside my front door in case the area has recently been changed to an arthouse ghetto without anybody telling me, but I can confirm the supermarket is still there and so is the bookies, and yet I can't help finding this lot plain bloody stupid.

OK, so the music is mildly interesting, but I can't get to listen to it for more than a few seconds without the sound of Alec Empire blaring out slogans in English in his blatantly German accent. It's like having a spotty 14 year old exchange student barging in the room every few seconds and yelling as loud as possible when I'm trying to listen to a record.

"REVOLUTION ACTION! What we gonna go for?" etc, etc, etc, of anarchy, revolution again, not, fuck you, chaos ad nauseum — this makes The Prodigy seem mildly sophisticated. As for the comparison with Big Black, well, Steve Albini, with the likes of "Fish Fry", "Jordan, Minnesota", and countless other songs, had one of the most original narrative techniques I've ever come across, plus he was about ten years younger than

Empire when he wrote most of them.

Looking in the Invisible Jukebox of the same issue, Empire states he's not too keen on Einstürzende Neubauten because the lyrics are too much like art. Point taken, but surely we can find some sort of middle ground to this sort of thing. He won't use the German language as it might lead to fascism, he goes on, but by doing so he might be able to avoid the English-speaking world either collapsing in hysterics or turning off the music, which admittedly might well be worth a listen. He'll claim he's doing it for the kids — the kids aren't dumb, Alec, believe me. Can I suggest that in future *The Wire* has a special kids' section for stuff like this?

Andrew Fentem Manchester

Net returns

I used to pick up *The Wire* because it had many features on some of my favourite bands. Just recently my work situation changed and I have to take public transportation, so now I finally have the chance to read it from cover to cover. Thanks for taking the care to put together a really well done magazine. It makes the commute much nicer!

If I may suggest an article on something that's pretty relevant to what I've been involved with for the last seven years. I'd like to see some kind of acknowledgement of the Net. I think the World Wide Web has been extremely beneficial to modern and independent music for a variety of reasons. For nearly no charge, anybody can have a Web presence, sound clips and resources to buy music. People in the local mall won't carry (or WILL carry at painfully high prices) The Net can also be more resourceful than your local library when it comes to finding information on new or non-mainstream things, and I'm well aware your staff has used my title corner of the world (www.brownsound.com) for some background info on some of your features.

I think it also has had an impact on popular music — but in more negative ways, however.

- The validity of bands is compromised — the more popular a band/artists is, the more the detrimental fan Websites go up (do a Web search on Tom Amos or Korn), the more uninformative a corporate Website is made (a corporate Website is only concerned with an artist's latest album and nothing more). When there's no focus, no central information hub, the information gets distorted and inaccessible. When there's no trustworthy source, people will find better things to do with their time than look up band information — we're dealing in a day and age where the span of attention has been reduced to seconds. Only rarely will a major popular artist have an official link to information in a timely and appealing manner.

- Free MP3 sites are killing sales — the major label bands seem to have more floating MP3s out there. Many people choose to simply load what they want on their machines rather than buy the CDs to listen to while they're at work. Many of the major labels have been

folding into others since sales have gone way down on corporate product. Anyhow, thanks for your attention
Jon Whitney East Arlington, USA

Where's the dope?

I love the fact that you have added HipHop to your In Brief review section. But being from this part of the country, I can only criticise the magazine for a lack of quantitative reviews. Sure, you cover the main dope mid-group and artists — Company Flow, etc — but there is so much more out there in these parts that is not being recognised. It's time to figure out how to get a hold of all this very dope HipHop and make the worldwide HipHop community more aware. For HipHop fans who want anything and everything dope, try Sandbox Distribution (Website.sandbox.com). They deal with everything underground, from scratch mix tapes, to Rawkus, Stones Throw and everything in between the coasts. *Wire*, it's time to get some good HipHop connections.

Knowles Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

Readership Survey prize winners

Many thanks to everyone who took the time to fill out and return our readership survey. We received more than 900 replies, all of which were eligible for entry in the draw to win free CDs! First name out of the hat was that of Peter Hignell of Brighton, who scoops up a bumper box of 50 new CDs. 20 runners-up prizes of a mystery CD go to: Anders Franker Olsen, Copenhagen; Maria-Maria-Hatzara, Greece; Matthew Atkins, London; Jefferson Detrey, Seattle; Glenn Buckley, Surrey; Rory Manchess, Hong Kong; Massimo Tocciafanti, Italy; Paula Wilson, Penwortham; Robert Manley, Manchester; Terry Englebrecht, Johannesburg; Karl Jensen, Geneva; Benjamin Levinstein, Israel; Mark Stevenson, Maidstone; Christine Bernagaud, Birmingham; Demian Castellanos, Cornwall; Luis Miguel Rodriguez, Farnham, Spain; Chris Bailey, Aberdeenshire; Peter Anderson, Notts; Roger Fezzhugh, Northampton; Didac Lagarriga, Barcelona.

Corrections

Issue 1B6: We forgot to credit Louise Gray for conducting the Invisible Jukebox interview with Blixa Bargeld. Apologies. In Soundcheck, the title of Cibo Matto's new album was written incorrectly. The actual title is *Steeve 'Type A*. In the Directory, we omitted to list the contact for Oxygen Music Works, which issued Gary Lucas's *ElParadiso* CD. It is 20B West 30th St, Suite #1205, New York, NY 10011, USA, Web www.owm.com. The Label Lore column omitted to print an address for Fisheye, Anamalous Records' UK distributor. Fisheye Distribution also handles mail order for many small independent labels, and can be contacted at: PO Box 110, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 6YT. E-mail fisheye@netcom.co.uk. Web www.netcom.co.uk/~gswell/fisheye.html. Issue 1B5: In the Directory, the Website address for the AltN Suon label should have read www.altnsuon.com □

"A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps" (Proverbs 14 v 15)

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"I eat the droppings of an elephant! So I can walk like a lame man!" The last thing I expected to hear in the basement lounge of Kongsberg's Quality Hotel are the lyrics to a South African folk song — sung in English by Norwegian singer Kristin Asbjørnsen. Asbjørnsen fronts Coloured Moods, a jazz/pop/world outfit not averse to throwing in the odd *Aster* Awake cover. Their set features too many overwrought compositions reminiscent of Sina Nordheim's lesser moments, but Coloured Moods are at least one of the more memorable attractions at the week-long festival in

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .

Nordic folk musics, close-miked "natural" instruments and ill-defined notions of spirituality. The official New Norwegian tongue is just such an artificial hybrid, fused from a variety of folk dialects in the early 20th century. That may be the view from the conference room anyway, but what all the radio interviewers attending the festival want to know from The Wire's delegation is: what's up with all these DJs jamming with jazz musicians in London? It's the future, right?

At the moment, Norway's most personable figure in the new jazz is also — after Garbarek — the most bankable. Bugge Wesseltuft is definitely a post-ECM musician: a keyboard player whose floating posies of Norwegian jazz trills play a kind of M-Base style cold fusion warmed through with input from DJs and funky drummers. He recently struck a worldwide licensing deal with Universal for his Jazzland label, and he uses his week in Kongsberg to install himself as an omni-operator able to appeal to a broad crossover audience that encompasses metropolitan clubgoers and New Music sophisticates

role, sampling his horn and working through a mic.

The unprepossessing Sunday school host of the Byrkstere's Hus was the venue for the most challenging sets of the festival. On the Friday night, piano giant Paul Bley teamed up with freeform percussion legend Tony Oxley — although following Bley's lacklustre opening solo recital and his announcement of Oxley as "comic relief," it wasn't clear whether this was going to be a team effort or a senior citizens' brawl. Oxley at 61 is too stoppingly monumental — an impressive, hawklike presence as he shapes up to a drum kit that looks more like a torture machine of beaten Benin bronze. Rolling around his equipment in beautiful rattling waves, he compresses micro-events, juxtaposes high and rumbling frequencies, generates unexpected squeals and resonances. After a long solo piece he is joined on stage by Bley, who makes no attempt to match the drummer's metallic, fantasia, instead flowing in a trickle of syrupy streams at the piano's high end.

Bley and Oxley barely exchange a word after their confrontation, neither do Finnish drummer Edward Vesala and pianist Iro Haarla after their magical set on the following night in quartet with bass player Anders Jerem and saxophonist Trygve Sævi. Perhaps that was because Vesala and Haarla, man and wife, had apparently decided to separate shortly before the show. It certainly made for a tension-laden, grueling hour and a half, beginning in a sub-aquatic, loose and flailing style as if the four musicians had just been dumped overboard. Timid in person, Haarla is exceptional on both piano and concert harp,



Superlisc

Kongsberg, a tiny village situated an hour and a half's drive out of Oslo. With more than a quarter of a century behind it, this is one of Norway's oldest jazz festivals, amply state-funded and this year bringing in a wealth of names, from big guns (Herbie Hancock, Paul Bley, Dianne Reeves), to a scattering of Norway's young bloods (Supersilent, Bugge Wesseltuft, Audun Kleive) and some literary rank outsiders (Tricky, Nigel Kennedy).

Judging by the persistence of dialogue in its arts media at the moment, Norway — a relatively young state, which only gained independence from Denmark in 1814 — is in a process of stocktaking its own cultural productions. As well as generating its own indigenous jazz ensembles and orchestras, it also calls on outside voices for reassurance. Michael Tucker, a UK academic and author of a recent study of Jan Garbarek, was wheeled into a festival conference room to expound on the character of Nordic jazz, which took a rather well-trodden route. Essentially, this prolongs the archetype of the reverberant shaman roaming the mountains in search of epiphany. This image privileges the retrieval of archaic

alike. In the faded Baroque/Rococo terraces of Kongsberg church, he plays grand piano with the female string quartet Veritas, a Balanescu-like ensemble happy to take on Wesseltuft's family-toddler minimalism. He's certainly got the kind of forward-looking zeal that can bring new ideas across to wider audiences, but on this evidence — TV theme process music — he's in danger of over-riding the cake.

An occasional collaborator with Wesseltuft, as well as Terje Rypdal and David Murray among others, drummer Audun Kleive has become as indispensable to the 90s Nordic jazz landscape as Jon Christensen was 20 years ago. Appearing on Kongsberg's open-air stage, his four-piece New Band sounds like a homage to Herbie Hancock's Sextant-era Sextet. Synth players Christian Wallumrød and Ståle Storlekken, sporting authentic Skop Bifreny style multi-chord sideburns, manipulate a pile of analogue keyboards with gusto, feverently hanging on Kleive's every stroke. Trumpeter Arve Henriksen, who like Storlekken is a member of the Oslo-based electric jazz unit Superlisc, takes the acid-soaked Eddie Henderson

which she pummels like a cat sharpening its claws on a curtain. This was weird, sunless, tenebrous stuff, a hallucinogenic-jazz of bone, wood and scoured entrails.

Deep in the night, the stage is taken over and torn apart by the mighty Superlisc. As demonstrated by the four CDs they have so far released on the Rune Grammofon label, jazz has rarely carried this kind of catastrophic Promethean fire. Drummer Jare Vespestad is a constant wellspring of gushing, elemental brain, Helge Slet's samplers suck up the sonic emissions from the rest of the group and shoot them back into the mix in a volley of ice-cold stabs and sheets. Their continuous hour and a half set is a tease — they are reportedly accustomed to scorching three-hour meltdowns. But their energy — democratically leaderless but held aloft by their internal combustion — is eternal delight.

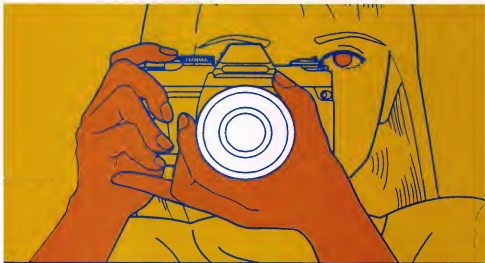
Norway's summers are getting hotter — this year it reached 30 degrees even above the Arctic Circle. As its edges melt, there is a new, volatile and utterly contemporary Norwegian music fighting to get out, riding on the deluge. **ROB YOUNG**

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bites

FX Randomiz

Laptop dancer

It's 3am Cologne time when I dial up FX Randomiz. An answering machine picks up the call. "floo", stutters what sounds like a toy cow. I start to leave a message, apologizing for the lateness of the call, when Herr Randomiz, the musical alias of Felix Hoefler, comes on the line. "Hello, I'm here. Sorry, I've only just woken up." He prefers working by night, he says — "my day job is sleeping" — and he's just been editing a track for a forthcoming compilation on Mouse On Mars's Song label, which also released his latest EP, *Stack*. Containing three computer-processed tracks of trash, *anerant*

rhythms, *Stack* is the third release in Song's "Dance Perversion" series.

"The Song series is not so much to make dancefloor music in the sense of 'four to the floor', but rather interesting music that deals with rhythm," Felix explains, "so maybe people can dance to it. And that also leaves enough room for listening, without dancing. *Stack* is different from my other releases. It is more focused on rhythm, but it is also less 'flowing'. There are more hard changes and cuts in the arrangements, and even some mistakes left in the music."

Stack is an apt title. Randomiz's tracks are the essence of working vertically: Waggish samples and wind-up loops are piled high, their whirling edges massaging one another until the whole wobbly construction threatens to topple.

FX Randomiz is a key player in Cologne's hyperactive electronic music community. But he is originally from Bamberg, a small Bavarian town where Hegel published his *Phenomenology Of Spirit* while editing the town's newspaper. He formed his first group, Four Square Logos, with another Bamberg native, Jan Werner (later of Mouse On Mars), and guitarist Josef Suchy. The three issued their first work on their own Gehem label (before moving en masse to Cologne in 1990). Since then Felix has studied both music theory and law, out music (twice) and released a string of uncategoryable post-Techno tracks. He recorded his solo debut as FX Randomiz, 1997's *Goffer* (A-Musik), while finishing a degree at Cologne's Academy of Media Arts, and launched a side project, Holosud, with Schlämmerzger's Jo Zimmermann (their debut LP, *Finewiss Abzumpfen*, which loosely translated from the Dutch means, "Pump water from the fine wast", appeared on A-Musik late last year). *Goffer* is an object lesson in impatience, in which linear development has been abandoned for the pure rapture of density and accretion. "Listening to sounds and loops is normally enough for me, because I can make up the rest in my mind," says Felix. "I am a lazy person, I don't see any reason to really work on songs which I can hear without working them out. To be honest, I am not really able to produce the music that I hear in my head, so composing songs is hard work for me. I don't go into the studio and say, 'OK, Felix, let's do something experimental now'. I just play around with all the tools and as soon as something interesting appears I start listening. Everything else just happens."

Felix's musical training means he stands out in a town of autodidacts. He grew up in an almost conservatory atmosphere, studying piano for 13 years in a family filled with musicians. Coming up against the brick wall of tradition embodied in his training prompted him to quit music. "When I finished school I tried to actively forget how to play the piano," he says. A 1993 collaboration with Werner dubbed *Slow* (Gehem) helped ease him back into music. Described in *The Wire* as "an unsung electronic masterpiece, an outstanding pre-Oval example of caposed sampling virtuosity," *Slow* has become something of a holy grail to acolytes of Cologne's often hard-to-follow creative metastases. Felix recalls, "When I started to work with Jan he hadn't learned any instruments. He played drums but he didn't play any keyed instruments, and I saw how pure his approach was as a result. He explored things. With all of my theory and 13 years of piano, I didn't have this freedom."

"For me, music starts with one little element that then evolves and cries for brothers, sisters, parents, friends," he concludes. "You have to listen to that element very carefully to find out what exactly it wants. A static sound, if its structure is complex enough, can be as interesting as a whole composition. If music is too linear it becomes boring." **SEAN COOPER** *Stack* is released this month on Song.

Atman

Natural mystics

"As a musician I'm inspired by the rituals and traditions that remind us of our relationship to the whole web of life," declares Atman's Marek Styczynski, "our relationship to nature, that is full of passion and love, joy and pain, fun and sorrow — its life and creativity in its core meaning. That's why we often stand for wildlife protection and against investments that are going to destroy this unimaginable wealth. Here is my family and my soul and I'm going to protect them as long as is necessary."

Atman (a Buddhist term for 'self,' the divine ground of human consciousness) are a ragtag Polish collective of environmentalists, forsters and mystics based in the Carpathian mountain range at the dark heart of Europe. "We are the mountaineers



Above: Atman. Below: The Magic Carpathians

inspiration. We're very involved in the Deep Ecology movement which is based upon the belief that all living beings have intrinsic worth regardless of their instrumental value to humans."

Styczynski is wary of subordinating Atman music to any particular political cause, however. "It's impossible to put any ideas into music, it's an abstraction," he says. "Of course we use the covers and titles to express our attitude, for instance, proceeds from our *Save The Wolf* EP went towards a campaign run by the Workshop For All Berings, which we provided information about, on the cover. These days it seems there is so much impudent advertising around that I really wish that what I do could be free of the incidence — even if there are very important and meaningful messages."

Atman mainly favour a traditional acoustic instrumentation, drawing heavily on the large collection of obscure ethnic instruments collected by Styczynski during his worldwide travels. He believes that each one is unique and boasts its own soul, which the player must learn to activate. "When you reach for a so-called 'ethnic instrument' you involve yourself in a comprehensive message," he says. "One part of the message is telling us, I am a child and priest of a certain human tribe and its surroundings." This part of the message is passed on by so-called folk music. But I see the remaining part of this message, which is telling me, I am also a part of a common tradition, of the universal message of planet Earth. I possess a certain form, sound and playing technique because only that which is very intimate has a chance to become simultaneously a part of the universal."

Improvisation is the key to unlocking and freeing these vibrations, for accessing the OM, the mother of all sounds. "Perversely I would say that only when you are acting as a channel through which sounds flow can you create something that's truly new and fresh," Styczynski ventures. "But to open such channels much work has to be done. For me it always seemed I had to really dip into life, to experience intensely and bravely, to open my

mind and heart. Improvisation is the only thing that matters to me in music. I'm not interested in any 'schools of improvisation' or prescriptions on how to improvise, that seems to me to be a paradox. A couple of times I've seen improvising musicians in India, in what we call trance or possession states. This kind of improvisation interests me the most, where you have to engage all of your intuition and concentration. This state of mind/body is very close to meditation. In fact it is meditation."

Just when the world has finally caught up with them, Styczynski feels that after 20 years Atman have run their course, he is about to launch a new project called The Magic Carpathians, a collective based around himself and the otherworldly vocals of Anna Nacher, who appeared on Atman's swansong album, *Tradition*.

"I felt the frame we worked within in Atman was suddenly too static, too constructive," he explains. "The crucial point was improvisation, I needed more space for improvised music. I realised that my musical language and needs are different from those of my companions. In The Magic Carpathians I have the freedom of playing whatever I feel is right. Some of our concerts were played as in a dream."

The debut *Magic Carpathians CD, EthnoCore*, takes a huge leap into deep electronic space. Driven by crushingly powerful electric guitar and bass, the music staggers through peaks of riffs and howling chants to slow rippling pools of stasis. According to Styczynski, his new colleague Maciej Placzejewski "plays his guitar as if he came from the beautiful hell of dirty and brave sounds."

"Now I play what I like most — labyrinths and corridors — using a variety of ethnic instruments through which their own souls speak. If I'm lucky I act just as the channels for their message," he concludes. "Now is the time to look for our roots and our original, real culture, which for sure is not only Hollywood, Mickey Mouse and hamburgers." **DAVID KEENAN** Atman's *Tradition* is out now on Drunken Fish. The *Magic Carpathians' EthnoCore* is released this month on FLY.



Aki Onda: audio sportsman

Aki Onda

Existential electronica

"When I was in my teens art was my only way to escape reality," asserts Aki Onda, a 31-year-old Japanese omni-musician who has spent his mature years trying to break the bonds of nationality and musical fossilisation. His restless adventures with top-drawer avant musicians in his studio escape pod have resulted in two CDs of silverpointed urban songs, whose textures and sample loops fluoresce out of the digital backcloth like glowing reelfile. The most recent, *Un Petit Tour*, documents — in music and the photographs of Ayako Mago — a descent into the romantic and erotic life of Paris in the company of Jean-Jacques Birgé and Bernard Vitet's extemporaneous collective *Un Drame Musical Instantané*.

If anyone deserves to inherit Ryuchi Sakamoto's role as rootless cosmopolitan, it's Onda. 1998's *Beautiful Contradiction* CD shares Sakamoto's aesthetic delicacy and networking capacity, with a cast list that includes Bixia Borgeil, French improv guitarist Noël Akchôte, soundtrack composer Simon Fisher Turner, and on the extraordinary "Do You Remember?", singer Linda Sharrock, wife of the late electric jazz guitarist Sonny. "I was inspired by her voice for a long time," rhapsodises Onda. "It consists of strength and weakness, a fever and ice-cold sadness — I thought her voice was a 'beautiful contradiction' in itself. Perfect voice for me. Normally it's not difficult to find someone to work with. If I listen

to their sound carefully I can know them immediately. I just follow my intuition. I saw Noël Akchôte in 1996 or 97, his music was so brilliant and I assumed this guy has a sense that is very close to mine. He knows how to reflect himself in music — he's not just a guitarist."

More than a successful fusion of chameleonic personalities and studio synthesis, Onda's music is an intimate drama that reflects his existential hunger, which comes to the fore in the texts on *Un Petit Tour*. Redacted by Bern and Vitet and Agnès Desros, they build a depiction of an intense love that threatens to send the narrator over the threshold of death. "When I met Jean-Jacques Birgé," Onda says of his principal collaborator, "I realised that we had the same problem, by chance. We were both in some trouble about love. We talked about how that kind of experience can influence our music. Although this album was based on one theme and we used many elements like a film, there was no one specific story. Music, texts and photographs: they are all fragments of our daily life. I expect people could make their own story by experiencing this album."

Onda's projects sure dock up the air miles he records in London, Tokyo, Paris and New York. Does he need to be on the move to make music? "My imagination is developed in an imaginary space," he muses, "not in a physically existing city such as Tokyo, London or Paris. Somewhere between two cities. A place maybe existing in a film. Milan Kundera, a Czech writer who now lives in France, his books gave me a good suggestion on this."

The sleepwalkers to *Un Petit Tour* began with a manifesto of disapproval: "Contemner les obsèques, Déjouer les objets." "I'm applying this philosophy to my music,"

states Onda, who had his own head rearranged in a London Hip-hop club in 1988. "I encountered Hip-hop and House music — that was the turning point of my life. When I saw Ice-T's gag at the Fridge, Boston, I was shocked with their playing; it worked like an epiphany for me, and I assumed that I could do something in music even if I hadn't had any musical education."

Onda now lives in Tokyo but grew up in the historical southern town of Nara, which gave him easy access to Osaka, Japan's second city and home to a strong avant-garde music tradition. "I was a troublemaker in school and I felt like a stranger all the time," he remembers. "Finally I dropped out. I suppose my sense is rather different from the average Japanese. Where is my home?"

Escaping into an aesthetic universe revealed to him by his painter mother, and mindful of the hardships he witnessed in Nara's Buraku ghetto of displaced ethnic folk, he bypassed the plasticity of 80s New Wave by taking refuge in the free jazz of Albert Ayler, Art Ensemble Of Chicago and Don Cherry. After a few years in London he moved to Osaka, had his mind blown by seeing Otomo Yoshihide's Ground Zero ("The lunatic sound was so desperate!"), and fell in with scream-singer Yamabuki Eye (whose group, Boredoms, Onda had once photographed as a teenager) and electronics expert Nobukazu Takemura, forming Audio Sports in 1990. "The model in Osaka was completely different from Tokyo's more lively and crazy," he says. "It was a small society and everyone knew each other."

Audio Sports grew from the skewed Hip-hop of their 1992 debut *Era Of Glorious Gas*, to the psychotropic brew on 1996's mini-album *Strange Emotion*, which featured Otomo, rapper D-Zine, saxophonist Greg Osby and gender-bending synth player Happy Karmyama. By 1998 Onda was ready to strike out on his own, his solo work opens out a space where musicians can spend their contributions into a sound pool. "When I work with musicians in the studio," he says, "I always bring a master plan and try to fix it with them. But sometimes the others have a better idea. And if it's better than mine, I definitely take it. I don't have an interest in a world where everyone has the same idea. I'm not an egoistic tyrant."

"That's the most important thing in my music," he continues. "Is that I'm always describing 'personal politics' between individuals. My music exists where their gaze and my gaze cross. When it happens in a studio, I catch it quickly and record it onto a tape. I connect such fragments that really connect to our experiences. I try to create a space where voices mingle and overlap. So I think I'm just describing our daily life. I'm always watching for something 'behind the sound'."

If the content of so much electronica reflects back only to the tools that constructed it, Onda's poetic sensibility suggests a new expressive range. "I've been questioning whether music evolves from music itself. I stopped thinking about this possibility in 1996. That's why I stopped using the project name Audio Sports. I was playing with musical experience and eclectic styles anonymously: a sound game, I think. But what I'm doing now is a mind game." **ROS YOUNG** *Un Petit Tour* and *Beautiful Contradiction* are out now on All Access

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Los Zafiros

Well heeled Cubans

In Cuba, 1962 was the best and worst of times. Three years into the Revolution, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara's altruistic notion of the "New Man" was on the brink of being annihilated in the Cuban missile crisis. Meanwhile in the capital Havana, an indigenous teenage culture was belatedly taking shape. In the early 60s Cuban musicians may have been banned from playing in the US, but hip young Havana had its ears glued to American rock 'n' roll and the Ivy League harmonies of The Platters, The Jordanaires and Frankie Lymon. To counter US pop insurgency, Cuba birthed the extraordinary five-piece vocal group Los Zafiros (The Sapphires), who subverted doo-wop's delectable character with a lush, almost surreal hedonism.

The group was founded in 1962 by Kike Morúa and Miguelito Canco, both from the Cayo Hueso district of old Havana, but its secret weapons were Ignacio Elvilde, whose voice soared so high that John Lennon once asked to inspect his throat to see if it was hiding a secret device, and guitarist/music director Manuel Galbán, one of the last surviving members, who has since experienced a whole new level of success in Spain with a group of rock 'n' roll revivalists called The Viesja Trova Sarragüera. He also plays guitar with Buena Vista Social Club star Ibrahim Ferrer. "I saw Los Zafiros playing a residency at the Varadero Oasis Hotel," he explains, when I ask him how he joined the group. "I liked their energy."

Launched during the early euphoric years of the Revolution, Los Zafiros' career finally crashed in the mid-70s, when the state was tightening its grip, exerting pressure on artists through the state-controlled record company EGRM. Los Zafiros' rebellious nature was always at odds with this increasing bureaucracy. Even so, Galbán belongs to a generation that stonewalled political questions. A reluctant interviewee, his replies are scarcely more enthusiastic on less contentious issues. However, Los Zafiros' music told a different story.

Added to its initial mix of manic doo-wop were elements of rumba, bolero, bossa nova and calypso. Their early 60s hit "Bosca Cubana!" — a two and a half

minute eclectic pop symphony complete with strange whoops and screeches pushing the song to the edge of collapse — was as ambitious in scope as anything by The Beach Boys or Phil Spector.

Throughout the 60s the group enjoyed a run of massive hits in Cuba. As American concert halls were off limits, they were forced to tour countries that were more ideologically compatible with Cuban communism, such as Russia and Poland. Later they played in India and Asia, where Galbán was amazed at the popularity of Cuban music. "These Hindus went crazy for our music," he laughs. But the real high point, he recalls, was a week's residency at the Pans Olympia. "Perhaps that was the peak of our success," he sighs, "because to utter the word Pans in Havana in the 60s was really as good as it got."

Galbán is one of only two group members still alive. Not even communism could keep in check their joie de vivre, which got more out of control the more successful they became. In the end, most of the group died alcohol-related deaths. As he describes it, it was another case of sex, drink and mambo excess. "There weren't drugs," he explains, "the drug of choice for Cuban musicians is usually rum." Gradually he took on the role of group leader as the others disintegrated around him. "They didn't eat," he complains, "as soon as the bars opened they were there, pulling down the shutters. The liver can't put up with it. They were killing themselves and there was nothing I could do. I was on the verge of a heart attack."

The in-fighting among the group spilled over into hotel winking sprees, which eventually exhausted the patience of the increasingly strict Cuban regime, whose media frowned on such decadent behaviour.

Finally Galbán had also had enough. He left behind a sad parody of Los Zafiros, who ended up playing Havana's sleazebest and most downmarket clubs. Ignacio no longer found himself able to reach the high notes, and Los Zafiros imploded in 1975.

Now that many forgotten Latin musics are being lifted out of cold storage, Manuel's career is thriving again, and World Circuit have also just released *Bosca Cubano*, a collection of Los Zafiros' finest moments. "I feel reborn with the re-release of this music," he says. Belatedly, it seems, Los Zafiros' music might make it to America. **PETER CULSHAW** *Bosca Cubana is out now on World Circuit*

hitstream

Just when you thought it was safe to go out on tour. Barely a month after Sonic Youth's equipment was stolen comes the latest attack crime: **Jon Spencer's Blues Explosion** had their gear seized on a 14m red on 22 July. Filched from the group's van, parked outside the Le Sol Hotel in Vancouver, Canada, were a bunch of effects racks and personal stereo equipment, a Ludwig drum, a vintage and impossible Hoag Thornell, a guitar amp and a case of more than 30 CDs. Info on where this stuff might have walked to gratefully received at the group's "Fule Records HQ, contact them on 01 819 888 886, or e-mail aweb@brnha.com +++ Surely no one would dare steal anything from **Duran Duran** Galois, who has announced the premiere of her new song cycle, *Delusions*, will And Testament: Dedicated to the forgotten dead of the Armenian and Anatolian Greek genocides of 1915 and 1922, *Delusions* takes its name from the dead elegiacs placed on the murdered ones' graves, cautioning against disturbing the bodies. The piece includes texts by Walt Whitman and Henry Thoreau, while the music is inspired by the dark American blues of Blind Willie Johnson and Son House and Deep South spirituals. The eight performances take place between 11-27 September at Courts Castle in Gent, Belgium (for 00 32 265 27 28 38, e-mail aweb@brnha.com) +++ Musician and critic in perfect harmony shock. Pianist Improv Rock Rectangle have taken on a "single featuring guitar **Derek Bailey** (noting land playing over) two chunks of this, re-arranged poetry of our own correspondent **Ben Watson**. The tracks, recorded in 1993, comprise two of Watson's 28 *Shiver* / *Horror* poems, including such immortal couplets as: "Snicker to be swimming around the pray popple/eye/eye embos measured up to the carlet edge." We're happy to note that Derek's rendition sounds as perplexed by it all as we are. Stop press: contrary to earlier reports, Bailey will not be touring the UK alongside John Fahey in September/October — it's just Fahey solo. See Out There for details +++ Chicago's free jazz workaholic **Kean Vandermark** has just been awarded a whopping \$250,000 grant (over five years) by the Windy City's beneficent MacArthur Foundation +++ Original Velvet Underground guitarist and former Tony Conrad collaborator **Angus MacLise** has a CD's worth of archive recordings released for the first time in October by the American Sitarsize label +++ Phil Piatkowski's new electro-succulent Agital composition *Water* **Hitstream** steps up its activities this October with four CDs by sound thesauri Achim Wobrich, Angelophones, Lyle cyber Akira Rabelais, plus mammoth Kim Cascone and Icelandic soundscapers Salsapopulista. The label's packaging will undergo a complete redesign at the same time +++ In July, John Cage collaborator **Piero Carnegiani** celebrated his 80th birthday in New York with the premiere of his dance company's new work, *Speed*, featuring a specially commissioned score by Gavin Bryars. In the orchestra sit were the composer, Jim O'Rourke and Takehisa Kosugi, manipulating a live electronic mix. The show will travel to Lyon (November) and Turin (December) +++ Two independent labels celebrate ten years of existence this autumn. As well as **Platane's** live extravaganza (see Out There), Sheffield Techno label **Warp** head down to London between 3-5 November for three nights of synthetic pleasure. Among the acts playing at East London's Vibe Bar will be Red Snapper, Jim Tenor, Plast Broadcast, Autztrich, Scumsteins and Boards Of Canada.

THE TRAVELER



Brendan M Gillen's **Ectomorph** project is putting the neo-avant into electronic music, usurping the

kinky machines

"To me, electro was a music that was unfinished," says Brendan M Gillen. "It ended up so terrible, so cheesy, yet there was something really special there. Compared with a lot of contemporary Techno there was more musicianship involved, a nicer balance between the keyboard lines, just a whole better vision behind the music. I wanted to reactivate those ideas and and push them further."

Gillen is a crucial node in the panglobal rhizomatic network of neo-electro. He makes music as the core member of Ectomorph, issues his own and other artists' tracks on his Interdimensional Transmissions label, based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and disseminates releases from aesthetically aligned imprints, like Miami's Schematic and Detroit's Puzzlebox and Ersatz Audio labels, via his distribution company, Star 67. Though he's fully aware of the sheer tonnage of retro kitsch generated by the 'electro revival', Gillen talks about the resurgence of interest in early 80s electrofunk and synth pop as part of "the dawning of a new generation. The first epic of Techno is over — the era that started with Derrick May and ended with Jeff Mills — and now we've entered a new phase."

Born in 1971 and bred in the Michigan industrial towns Flint and Pontiac, Gillen discovered a passion for radio and electronic music listening to Charles Johnson, aka The Electrifyin' Mojo, on WGPR, and Jeff Mills, aka The Wizard, on WJLB. "Mojo had a social agenda, bringing black and white together by crossing the musics," he recalls. "It was Mojo who made European artists like Larsons Dancereuses [the early 80s electronica unit led by former DAF member Chrisio Haas] and Visage as important locally as George Clinton. Mills pre-recorded his shows on a four-track reel-to-reel



Ectomorph, left to right: DJ feedlather, Brendan M Gillen and Mike

sterile reign of Detroit Techno. Words: Simon Reynolds. Photography: Nicola Kuperus



art to its slowest speed, then played the tape on the air (largest). It was a total sonic collage — what sounded like four records simultaneously — that took the whole idea of “Trick DJing” way into the beyond.”

It isn't his similarly exuberant attitude to radio. As music director of Ann Arbor's famous college station WCBN, and presenter/producer of two shows, *Cruel Colours* and *Exposition*, he draws on a staggering interdisciplinary scholarship in music, encompassing Techno, all rock, industrial, jazz, you name it. In between college radio, studying maths at the University of Michigan, geeking around as a computer hacker/phone “phreaker,” Gillen also worked at the famous Detroit store Record Time where he got most of his local Techno community. After a spell working for Carl Craig's Planet E, Gillen started Interdimensional Transmissions (IT), and formed Ectomorph as a sort of “faceless musical collective through which a lot of different members could pass.” His first collaborator was a member of Drexciya, the secretive Detroit aquatunk guerrillas who almost singlehandedly reintroduced electro ideas into the 90s Techno soundtrack. Indeed, when Ectomorph's debut 12” “Subsonic Vibrations/Paradox View” came out on IT in 1995, Drexciya's cut following misconstrued it as one of the latter's side projects.

Given the robo-schick that generally surrounds electro, it's surprising to hear Gillen describe his interest in it in terms of its humanity. “With Techno initially, we tried to pretend we were robots and that was really fun,” he says. “But what we're about is electronic music made by humans for humans.” And while Gillen is a fan of early 80s videogames, he has little time for the old school trappings (Pac Man, graffiti, popping ‘n' locking, etc) that give most neo electro its lamentably nostalgic aura. As Ectomorph, Gillen is interested in electro as a musical form. At its best, he argues, neo electro represents the return of Techno's repressed: melody, vocals, fluency and funk. Before appeal, Gillen asserts, primarily because its syncretism seemed refreshing — that point in the mid-90s when Techno was tied to the thumping metronome of a four-to-the-floor kick drum.

Finally, he cites Ziggy Modeliste, drummer in the New Orleans protokunk group The Meters, as the greatest influence on his own music. Where Jungle producers responded to Techno's increasing stiffness by funkling things up with breakbeats originally manufactured by drummers like Modeliste or The JB's Clyde Stubblefield, electro artists like Gillen program their drum machines to create brand new beats. These quasi-breakbeats are ridden with syncopations but sound dry, lacking both the *hi-hat* warmth of acoustically mixed drums and those barely perceptible inconsistencies and microerrors that give human drumming a feel. Funky as hell when done well, but listen closely and it's the acoustic equivalent of pixel vision. Still, the drum programming by some of Gillen's allies often rivals *Drum Corps*’ convoluted beat schemes.

Ectro's funk is dependent on what Gillen calls “the universal drum machine,” the Roland 808. Alongside its distinctive snare, hi-hat, claw and rimshot sounds, the 808 is most famous for the sub-bass rumble produced by detuning the kick drum — a smudged, red-zone undertone that still quakes beneath contemporary regional rap styles like Miami Bass and New Orleans Bounce. Gillen and his comrades use the 808 to create stabbing, percussive basslines — BOOMP bup-bup-bo BOOMP — which syncopate with the intricate drum patterns and make the dancer bump ‘n' grind rather than stomp in strict time, Techno-style.

These 808 basslines connect the ostensibly any world of Ectomorph with the sleazy milieu of Detroit Bass, the booty-shaking soundtrack for go-go dancing at strip bars. Hugely popular with Michigan's black working class, Detroit Bass (aka Booty) might share Miami Bass's lewd, rapid-fire rapping about “ass n' titles,” but it has a significantly broader sonic spectrum. In sets and mix CDs by a Detroit Bass DJ like Assault, you'll hear Charle Rich'din tracks, the darkside Jungle of early Reinforced, Asher Twin's “Isoprophet” and insanely sped-up R&B ballads, right next to Miami Bass records. Gillen is so enamoured of Detroit Bass's impurist frenzy that he's incorporated local booty-shaker/scratchmeister DJ Godfather into Ectomorph's live incarnation. Despite its encouraging mix of crowdpleasing populism and unexpected openness to experimental sounds, Detroit's Techno elite think Bass is a disgrace. It

ouly offends them that local youth prefer “that Booty shit” to their delicate electronic watercolours. But in Detroit, Bass outlives the Detroit techno vassalhood the likes of Stacy Pullen. Interdimensional Transmissions' embrace of the 808 boom therefore has socio-political as well as musical resonances. If Detroit Techno has never had much going on in the bass frequencies, it's because the rumpshaking low end connects to HipHop, to the ruffneck youth from the projects that the middle class Techno aesthetes tried to exclude from their gatherings. Indeed, in the 1980s Techno party flyers would go so far as to specify “No jts” — a derogatory term for ghetto youth, which male Booty/Bass fans reappropriated as the name for their style of dancing (“the jt”).

Gillen traces the social and aesthetic schism back to the late 80s, when “Derrick May took a stand very early on, saying that HipHop was this stupid form of music.” As a result, Detroit Techno denied itself the HipHop-derived invigoration of breakbeats, bass and samples that in Britain spawned Jungle (a genre that's very popular with Booty DJs in Detroit). Privilege melody and soul, Detroit Techno has too often failed to recognise that body music has its own “intelligence” — a rhythmic urgency and complexity that's frequently more advanced than head-orientated electronic music.

“I always thought it was a shame that people in Detroit thought they were too good



to make music that just makes you want to grind," says Gillen, "the way James Brown records make you shake in a really dirty way." Where Detroit Techno seeks to transcend the earthly plane, Booty music is all about base materialism, where Techno aspires to profundity, Detroit Bass prefers profanity. It might be outrageously sexist, but this music is more popular with women than lofty minimal Techno, if only because, even on its own lowly level, it acknowledges the existence of the body, sexuality and gender difference. "One of the reasons I went with the BOB and an electro approach was that it was a chance to put the sex back into the music," says Gillen. "With minimal Techno we had trimmed the sex right out. It was gay music. Girls like synchopation. And like Renegade Soundwave said, women respond to bass."

Another aspect of electro's populism, says Gillen, "is its melodic content. Techno today is more about tones. Right now, the ultimate Techno group is The Advent, who make this perfect dancefloor orientated Techno that's just rhythm and texture." While Gillen appreciates such maestros of austerity as Dan Bell and Rob Hood, he and the rest of the ITStar 6.7 rhizome have deliberately turned to early 80s European synthpop as a tenuous alternative to minimalism.

"The great stuff about this era of mostly English synthpop is that it functioned on a pop level but underneath there was often really great synthesis going on," he enthuses. "The really intricate interlocking keyboard lines in Gary Numan or Thomas Dolby, that's very influential on the electro groups around now." Not that Ectomorph or the Schematic artists are exactly making pop music. The Ersatz Audio label has released *Oral-Audio*, a compilation EP of 80s influenced synthpop songs, as a blow against Techno's "language barrier", its "fear, or reluctance, to incorporate vocals." Ectomorph deploys the human voice rarely and only sparingly. Live, Gillen and partner enkia issue terse commands through a cheap K-Mart megaphone with its buttons set to "angry" or "robot." And on "Subversion", the lead track on the new Ectomorph EP *Destroy Your Powercenters*, the vocal is grotesquely distorted and metalised. But the forthcoming "Tiny Pieces" features a sung vocal that harks back to the Angelic/androgynous of John Fox or Cybotron. Mostly, though, for all its butt-bumprig BOB bass and haunting synth refrains, Ectomorph music is pretty severe, as anorexic as anything coming out of Detroit Techno. As heard on classics like "Telekinesis", the Ectomorph sound is a cryogenic funk somewhere between Man Parrish, Nitro Deluxe and Sweet Exorcist — all pinky chime riffs, glassy ripples of synchusion, ice crackle hi-hats and flourescens bass. Their synaesthetic yet ascetic palette of textures shows that Gillen is as devoted to rigorous taxonomical research as anybody working in the post-Autotech field of Intelligent Dance Music.

"What I and the Schematic and Ersatz Audio guys are trying to do is get into really intense levels of synthesis," says Gillen, "using old, analogue, often monophonic synthesizers to generate really new, interesting sounds that are totally personal." Gillen is also adept at deploying dub reverbs to give Ectomorph music a crumbly quality, like it was frayed at the edges, that compares favourably with the desiccated crispness of "classic" electro. "I'm in love with tape echo!" he enthuses. "The kind of echo and effects I use are inspired by the way King Tubby played the Echoplex or Lee Perry played the phaser."

Like a lot of neo electro producers, Gillen's embrace of analogue equipment is a strategic retreat from the mine of copions presented by digital technology. He concurs with Holger Czukay's maxim that restriction is the mother of invention: "If you walk into a studio with a million possibilities it's often hard to come up with a focused idea. I started out with only four pieces of gear, and I couldn't multitrack, so everything had to be done live, the first time, correctly. A machine can be like a casual acquaintance or somebody you know like the back of your hand. If you're that deep with a machine you can make it do things that nobody else can imagine."



The final factor that makes Ectomorph not exactly pop music or party fodder is the music's sinister mood spectrum. "My goal is to represent different psychic energies, different disturbed mental states," says Gillen. While some songs, such as "The Haunting", are about relationship fuckups, Gillen, a Coi fan and Georges Bataille reader, is also interested in the extremes of human experience and the outer limits of sexuality — specifically, sadomasochism. "Ectomorph is very fetish, S&M, power exchange related," he explains. "The kind of denial associated with bondage is very much linked to my music. It's a major drive for [the Dutch unit] I-4 uses the drum machine clap as punishment, and the snare sound as a whorack. That's how I want to

use my sampler. You could get some great percussive sounds from spanking — the sound of a butt slap rather than a handclap."

The way Gillen describes it, the pleasures of S&M parallel those offered by Ectomorph music, fusing mind and body, both constitute regimes of desire that are simultaneously highly conceptual and utterly visceral. Electro's latent project of denoting as drill dovetails with the way groups from Kraftwerk to DaF played with stereotypes of Teutonic discipline. But Detroit Techno's abiding fascination with all things German has occasionally veered into this dodgy terrain — Underground Resistance's U-boat inspired track "The Seawolf" is one such example. And Electro outfit Doppelreicht (an alias for the anonymous ex-Dreycyria member who originally partnered Gillen in Ectomorph) has gone all the way into a full-on flirtation with fascism, with the *Fascist State* EP and the single "Racial Sterilization". Nazi chic seems like a bizarre evolution for a former Afro-futurist warrior against global white supremacy, but Gillen explains it thus: "Detroit's a weird place where black and white cross in really strange ways. For a guy from Detroit's East Side of Detroit it's humorous. And it all stems from love of Kraftwerk — Doppelreicht are the world's best Kraftwerk tribute band."

As for the future, Gillen reckons, "Electro might be finished now." Well, he and his comrades have successfully deployed the genre's unpurposal potential, even as the flood of electro fadists have turned it into novelty music. Imminent albums from Ectomorph and Flexione — Gillen's home listening alias — are intended, he says, as "milestones" wrapping up one phase of activity. Gillen's next phase will involve grappling with digital technology and exploring other "unfinished" genres from dance music's past. "Only In Shadows", a track from the new *Destroy Your Powercenters* EP, sigposts his latest obsession. "This particular era of late disco, after disco was cool, when the music got really dubby," he says, "tracks by Arthur Russell, like *Dinosaur L's 'Go Bang #7'*, or The Disco Dub Band, this Jamaican group who did a cover of The D'Jays 'For The Love Of Money' and used Echoplex on the trumpet. It was an era when disco got more gay again and more druggy — I call it Dubby Disco or Space Disco."

Beyond his own musical trajectory Gillen sees a general tendency in electronic music towards "songs, vocals, live playing human bassists — more textures and layers and colours." The way he describes it, we're at the brink of a post-Techno phase of eclecticism and pop-historical simultaneism, where the forward march of linear musical progress has despatched, but all the past's genres and moments are equally accessible to pilfering and renovation. □ Ectomorph's *Destroy Your Powercenters* EP is out this month on *Interdimensional Transmissions*.



ready to

Having fought the Ku Klux Klan on behalf of jazz, US drummer and electronics pioneer **Joe Gullivan** now goes into battle with Powerfield, his full-on trio with Gary Smith and Pat Thomas. Words: Edwin Pouncey

"The Modern Jazz Orchestra was one of the first bands I was involved in," remembers the US jazz drummer and live electronics pioneer Joe Galivan. "In the late 50s they were the first integrated big band in the South and we were given all kinds of hell. My mother got threatening phone calls from bigots and Ku Klux Klan members saying, 'We're gonna kill you and your son.' You can't believe what happened to us. The sheriff used to take me for a ride in his car and tell me, 'We don't want those boys of yours playing here!'"

"In the end we challenged the Ku Klux Klan to a fight with the band," he boasts. "We were playing the club and they called and threatened us. I said, 'You're Ku Klux Klan? Congratulations! Look, if you don't want us playing here, you get 14 of your biggest guys and we'll meet you in the parking lot at three o'clock on Sunday and fight it out. If we win we'll play, and if we lose we'll be too beaten up to play anyway!'"

"We had an alto player who was about five feet tall and I said to him, 'You're not working this week, I'm getting a bigger guy for the alto chair.' I called this friend of mine and said, 'Would you like to work with us on Sunday?' The only thing is you might have to fight!"

"I was so proud of those musicians," Galivan beams. "The band turned up with chains and baseball bats, it was surreal. We had seven black guys and seven white guys and there was this incredible spirit of comradeship. The tube player said to me, 'Don't worry, I can take three! This band went to war. They came for war. The Ku Klux Klan never showed up, but man, that band sounded good that day!'"

If there's a moral to this story, it's that jazz against racism really works — if you're prepared to back up your principles with baseball bats. And Joe Galivan's sense of honour and his commitment to the musicians he works with seems as strong today as it was when The Modern Jazz Orchestra declared war on their local Klan branch. An insatiable desire for experiment and improvisation is what links the many different projects he has been involved with down the years, from those Florida jazz warriors of the 50s to Powerless, the current duo with drum programmer Pat Thomas and guitarist Gary Smith. In between he has played with the likes of saxophonist Charles Austin, trumpeter Donald Byrd, cornet player, improviser and composer Butch Morris, pianist Keith Tippett, former Soft Machine members Elton Dean and Hugh Hopper, drummer Tony Williams and arranger Gil Evans. The first-time release in 1997 of *Love Cry Wrote*, an astonishing record of electric jazz recorded 25 years earlier with the late organist Larry Young and guitarist Nicholas, is a testament to his music's unwavering power

and we had the base on 35th Street in an arts centre. Every night I wasn't working I would go up there to practise, carrying the Minimoog in one hand and my baby in the other. I used to put him across my lap and play for eight hours. If we fell asleep the night watchman would wake us up and I'd take the kid home and put him to bed. I did that for several years."

In 1973 Galivan took his electronic music on the road, fully confident that, unlike his contemporaries, he could forge an entirely new language out of Robert Moog's strange device.

"The synthesizer got fucked up by people like Chick Corea and even Horace Hancock," he exclaims. "They played some really dumb music on it and never built up a vocabulary for the instrument. They just used it to make a different sound to play the same thing. Whether people like my synthesizer playing or not, I did attempt to create a whole new vocabulary for it. I didn't approach it like any other instrument. I knew."

Soon after he was approached by Robert Moog himself to test drive the inventor's latest electronic instrument, the Moog drum.

"He had just invented it," remembers Galivan, "and said to me, 'This would be right up your alley.' He had two prototypes, he sent one to Carl Palmer [of Emerson, Lake & Palmer] and the other to me. People would come and stare at the instrument, they would be totally freaked out by it."

Galivan played the Moog drum to great effect on Tony Williams's composition "There Comes A Time", the title track of Gil Evans's underrated 1974 album of mutant orchestral fusion. His working relationship with Evans had begun in 1969, when the arranger heard him play at the Newport Jazz Festival accompanying Elvin Jones and asked him to join his orchestra. Galivan still has fond memories of the session and its leader.

"The producer, Teddy Randazzo, sat in the middle," he says, "which made it a lot easier actually. There were an incredible amount of people involved and it was great. We recorded a ton of stuff. I mean at one point I was wondering if we were recording a triple album. Gil would always be urging the band not to play so precisely, so militantly. I learned a lot from him about large groups. We would sit for hours at his house and he would talk to me about these things, it was like going to school."

"I don't think the band gave Gil his due," he speculates. "He also had trouble communicating some things to the band. The problem with New York is that everybody's hip and people don't want to learn or listen. Sometimes the brass players came in thinking that they were so strong because they made a lot of money playing the trumpet, but they could have played a lot better. Gil talked to me a lot about phrasing. He said that one of the reasons he did so many rock things was because he felt that a [jazz] band, especially the younger players, had trouble phrasing things properly. No matter how he wrote it he could never get the proper phrasing."

The pair went on to record a tribute album devoted to the music of Jimi Hendrix, who Galivan had fleetingly brushed shoulders with while he was gigging with saxophonist Charles Austin in the late 60s.

"We played between him and The Mothers Of Invention at some festival," he recalls. "I think everybody went to the toilet when we played. We had a quartet with two drums, a bass and a saxophone. The audience were ready to dismiss us because we had acoustic instruments and we weren't known, but I noticed that both Hendrix and Zappa were behind the stage listening to our set."

The working relationship between Galivan and Austin began at the end of the 50s when Joe invited the saxophonist to sit in on a recording session. They continued to work together on and off for the next 30 years on a plethora of albums, tours, radio and festival appearances before the duo finally drifted apart. Galivan remains enthusiastic about their time together, even as he feels their music was somewhat overlooked.

"We were really advanced and well aware of electronic contemporary music and

rumble

Born in New York in the early 1940s and presently living in Hawaii, Galivan started out playing violin and then bass guitar before turning to drums. "I just always wanted to play the drums," he explains. "I kept asking for a drum kit and nobody would give it to me, so I finally just bought my own. I studied hard and began to play."

His music was still in its formative stages when he first heard Stockhausen's *Gesang Der Junglinge* in the early 60s. The encounter pricked his curiosity enough for him to contact the composer Vladimir Ussachevsky, then in residence at New York's Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, who agreed to demonstrate a synthesizer to Galivan, while outlining the principles of electronic music. Though he had since become a father, Galivan left the meeting sufficiently enthused to buy his own synthesizer so that he could conduct his own electronic music experiments.

"I bought this Minimoog for \$900 from an ad in *The Village Voice*," he recalls. "There was a group called Free Live Communications in New York with a lot of people in it like David Lebman, the Breckers, David Matthews, Steve Khan, Clint Houston,



jazz," he asserts. "We had a rapport. There are some moments on our records where you don't know who's playing which note, we blended together."

Their long-running partnership produced at least two incredible duo records, *Midscapes* and *Expressions To The Wind*, both of which are planned for reissue on CD. Unfortunately, at a personal level, matters between them aren't so rosy.

"I don't know what's happening with Charles," Galiani slowly sighs. "He just doesn't seem to want to make that kind of record any more. He's still playing, he plays good, but I don't know where he's at. He's gone through a lot of personal tragedy, he lost his wife a couple of years ago."

Shortly after recording the duo albums in the mid-'70s, Galiani moved to London and got caught up again in the UK jazz scene that he had temporarily been a part of in 1973.

"I was playing solo concerts and with Stu Martin and John Surman as The Trio," he explains. "[Bassist] Barre Phillips had left, so I became the third member for a short time. I did a bunch of solo concerts in Paris and Amsterdam and that gave me confidence to play. I had a fine year that year, it was really great. I also played at the Little Theatre with Lolli [Cottrill]. John Stevens was incredibly friendly and encouraging, he was a good guy. I played there a few times and felt that the scene was good. I later met [saxophonist] Elton Dean in New York and we hit it off really well."

Their friendship developed to the extent that Dean offered Galiani a place in Soft

with the President's approval. As the sleeve note to the *Love Cry Wont* CD records, "Nixon ordered White House aide J.R. Haldean to pull the plug on the concert fearing that this strange music would 'levitate the White House.'"

"What made that band special was not just the creativeness of the electronics, but everybody in the band had a strong rhythmic history," suggests Galiani. "When we played the blues you'd be out there bopping, if we got into a groove, that groove would be serious. This is what most avant garde bands can't do, they can't get the rhythmic thing happening."

I ask why it took 25 years to get a release for a record as powerful as *Love Cry Wont*. "We tried," he groans. "We called all the powers at the major record companies but they were all afraid of us. We weren't domestically correct, we just presented a whole different image. We were rough guys for them."

The untimely death of Larry Young in 1978 put paid to any dreams Galiani might have entertained about a *Love Cry Wont* remanifest with the White House. Besides, Galiani and Nicholas no longer speak.

"He's a movie and sometimes it doesn't play very well with me," he sighs in response to a question about his relationship with the mysterious guitarist. "We had quite a big success with *Love Cry Wont*. Right after that he went out and started working on a commercial album and I just stopped talking to him. I don't get it, the only success

he's ever had was by playing with Larry and me, then somebody gives him a little money and he goes and makes a real piece of crap. I can't deal with it any more. It's too bad. He's a great guitar player but his act is not very interesting to me right now."

What interests Galiani today is the very much active Powerfield, the volcanic trio made up of himself on synthesizer and electronic percussion, Pat Thomas on live electronics and Gary Smith on electric stereo guitar. The trio's first release, *Electronic Electric*, is a full-on, electronically manipulated fusion of Progressive rock and free jazz, distinguished by a level of rhythmic interplay that is almost extra-sensory.

"What I think is unique about this record from an electronic sense is that it has a lot of motion," Galiani enthuses. "The fact that Pat

and I were supplying most of the undercurrent comes from our rhythmic backgrounds. It's not static. Drum machine based music for me doesn't move because the beat and the rhythms are so perfect it's almost suspended. This music breathes and moves, there's always this flowing undercurrent of motion happening on the record."

Where does Smith's guitar fit into the rhythmic schemes concocted by Galiani and Thomas?

"Gary has his own voice," Galiani replies. "The thing is that everybody's playing the music. It's a group playing together with very few solos. Gary has his own thing which we are able to accommodate. He makes these big low densities. His sense of density is fantastic. It's very much like glue sometimes, he's capable of gluing things together. In the context of this band he knows exactly what to do."

After all those years playing out with Charles Austin, Galiani feels that the time is now right to fulfill the promise that began with *Love Cry Wont* by concentrating his energies into Powerfield. As well as a new trio recording, he also discusses an orchestral project which will include an electronic horn section made up of old friends such as Elton Dean and Evan Parker, alongside the core trio of himself, Thomas and Smith. He is even planning to move to Europe to make it easier for Powerfield to convene.

"I dreamt of making music like this for years," he concludes, "but I could never find the right people. In America I play a lot of so-called jazz, what ever the hell that is. I hate the word and from now on I think I'm going to tell people I play X music, because there's some really bad music around that goes under the name of jazz. I'm not big on nostalgia, but I am big on quality." □ Powerfield's *Electronic Electric* is out now on Parrottable.



Gil Evans



Galiani with Charles Austin

Machine. But the group's management had other ideas, causing a rift that eventually forced most of the original line-up to quit.

"The band would have probably stayed together longer if I'd been involved," Galiani sighs. "I liked the work and Elton would have definitely stayed [Bassist] Hugh Hopper and I can function together OK, although I still don't know [organist] Mike Radledge very well. But their manager had made a deal with [drummer] John Marshall and then brought me in after they had made the deal. They tried to screw me up at the audition which could have been bloody if I had not been together. It's a shame because I think I could have been a great band. I had something to offer which nobody at that time had."

He eventually teamed up to record and tour with Dean and Hopper, alongside Keith Tippett, in 1976. According to Joe, Tippett was chosen when one of the owners of the record company involved volunteered himself to play piano on the session.

"We said, 'No you may not!' Then Elton said, 'What about Keith Tippett?' I'd never met Keith at that time but I agreed and that's how it started. We went up to Norway and recorded *Cruel But Fair* for Compendium Records, then they put us out on tour. They were very good at booking tours but not very good at paying royalties."

Galiani's story is intermittently punctuated with brilliant one-off projects, the most remarkable being *Love Cry Wont* with Larry Young, all fired up by his involvement in Miles Davis's *Sketches Brew* sessions and The Tony Williams Lifetime, and guitarist/leader Nicholas. In June 1972 they participated in a series of concerts in Lafayette Park, Washington DC. The concerts were staged with earshot of the White House, but the group's raw-throated, synthesized jazz improvisations failed to meet

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John Paul Jones Tested by Mike Barnes

By the time he joined Led Zeppelin as bassist in 1968 at the age of 22, John Paul Jones had been a chormaster, a touring member of his father's dance band and the bass player on three number one hits (with Jetho Harris and Tony Meehan). In addition, as an arranger or musical director he had worked with The Rolling Stones, Burt Bacharach, Nico and The Walker Brothers, among many others. With Led Zeppelin he made nine albums and undertook 26 tours before the group dissolved in 1980, following the death of drummer John Bonham.

Since the breakup of the group Jones's range of musical activities has expanded to

include multimedia work with the likes of Brian Eno and Peter Gabriel, producing groups such as The Bushy Sufers, and writing and arranging soundtracks for TV and films. He has also written a number of electroacoustic and contemporary music compositions, such as *Microscopic Time* for string quartet and trombone, and *Musical Dimensions* for the Early Music vocal group, Peet Byllo. He was the musical director for the Spanish Pavilion at Expo 92 in Seville and in 1994 he collaborated with Diamanda Galas on the duo album *The Sinking Life*. Most recently, he has completed his first solo album, the instrumental *Zooms*, released on Rabert Frip's DGM label. The Jukebox took place in London.



country writing and recording the album in my studio out there

When I spoke to you last year you told me that you weren't really interested in working with singers. I don't really like the rock song form that much. It no longer interests me, put it that way. It's not singers per se, it's everything that surrounds the song-based form. Singers also have to be managed; you have to make sure conditions are right when they sing and that they don't sing too long. You can't tire them out going over something, because the voice is a fragile thing. Not that Diamond's voice is that fragile, but it still must be managed. It's not like playing instruments.

Since Led Zeppelin your music has used more electronics and samples. When did you first become interested in electronic and experimental music?

I had my first analogue synthesizer, a VCS3, in 1970, which I used to use on Zeppelin tracks. I was always interested in that stuff. When I was a kid, I was intrigued by sound possibilities, and I was always making instruments. My father was a trumpet player as well as a pianist and arranger, so I could pinch his mouthpieces and put bag lengths of rubber tubing and lengths of curtain rail and make strange noises. I was just experimenting all the time.

There was quite a lot of experimenting in Led Zeppelin too. The production alone was pretty experimental. We were always putting amps in cupboards, mics everywhere. "When The Levee Breaks," that huge sound, the most sampled bass drum in the world, didn't even have a mic on it; he [John Bonham] just had that foot. It would go through anything. I think there was a mic about ten feet above it, even 20 feet above it in a hall, on the landing.

ORIGIN UNKNOWN

"Lunar Bass" from The Speed Of Sound (Ram) [Referring to the mixed-back offbeat clanking sound.] I like that ka-ka, ka-ka, ka-ka! The great thing with a 303 is that just as the battery's dying it can do all

these things on its own, it's brilliant. Put an old battery in a 303 and it goes completely haywire. Nice space there. Don't like those [fuzzy synth] sounds. This is intelligent drum 'n' bass? Hardestep?

It gets confusing. Officially, it's Techstep. My daughter knows all this stuff. She makes up tapes for me. Renegade Hardware, DJ Damage I love it. I think it's great. I did a show, called Police Of Memories, for the Expo in Seville [1992] where we did some of this type of music. I was producing it and was also one of the composers, alongside two sets of Spanish and one set of American composers. It was all computer and sample based. It was great — we had a big scoreboard up of how many crashes were achieved during the session.

About John Bonham, you were saying his sound came from recording him hitting the drums very hard — the aesthetic of this way of producing a rhythm.

He'd have loved it. We were all huge James Brown fans and this is the logical conclusion. He basically tried to get his band to play like machines and that was the whole point, the starkness of the rhythm and no extra fills, except to progress it or take a turn. And a lot of this [programmed] stuff really grooves well. I'm really impressed how well a lot of young DJs and musicians understand the grooves that they're working with. People in my day didn't, generally [laughs]. You had to be a part of a rhythm section to do it but all these kids put this stuff together and they really know what kicks.



WILLIAM BYRD
"Have Mercy Upon Me, O God" from *Musica For Vols.*, *Voices & Keyboard* (Naxos)

A consort of vols. ... Hilliard [Ensemble]? It's very nice. Giles Farnaby? Tallis? No, I can't tell you.

It's actually William Byrd played by Red Byrd and The Red Consort Of Vols.

Red Byrd? More of them I remember. There were only four when I worked for them. I don't know what happened to English music. There were masses of English composers around that time [Elizabethan period] and they all disappeared — there was only really Purcell after that period.

Was the Early Music style of Amores Pasados something that you had always wanted to try?

I went to see [Arvo Part's] *Poissa* at Buckfast Abbey and [Red Byrd's] John Potter was Pontus Plate. I met them afterwards and it went from there. Fabulous voice, Potter. **Modern composers like Arvo Part have gone back via Bach to reclaim the strong but relatively simple melody lines of Early Music.**

Also Minimalism has opened the door to a lot of that, and again people are getting used to different sounds and instruments. I know one of the attractions for Red Byrd, John Potter was telling me when I was writing *Amores Pasados* for them, was that Early Music still has improvisation, which did not come the Victorian

editors. William Byrd himself was a virtuoso keyboardist and he would, in his vanatons, sit down, write a bit and then improvise for however long it took to show and everybody what he could do, which was quite considerable — and always musically appropriate. I should say.

BLUE CHEER

"Parchment Farm" from Vincebus Eruptum (Mercury)

It's all right [chuckles]. It's performed with conviction. Apparently the group's lives were changed when they saw Hendrix at Monterey.

I can hear that. [The track breaks down into a guitar solo with the drummer keeping time on hi-hat.] The drummer's wondering what the fuck's going on. "What do I do now?" Oh dear. I like the singer. [Drums come back in.] "Oh, it's us now. Now we go to the Spirit bit." Who is it?

Blue Cheer. This was recorded in 68, the year Led Zeppelin started. Were you aware of them as heavy blues contenders?

Not at all. I hadn't heard a note of them before. In the last two decades, there have been some blanket condemnations of white blues-based rock. Do you think Led Zeppelin's music still stands up?

Well, it was different from the black blues that was around at the time. Some of it's better than others. I thought we were particularly good at it, actually. They were mini-epics, some of those blues things. It's strange to play what's basically an intimate music very loud in a huge space. It requires something different from what is normally front room or back porch music. It's like playing bluegrass through enormous amplifiers — you can't imagine it somehow.

Bonno and I realised very early on that you had to come to some other kind of arrangement. When it's building up, you go over the top for a dynamic and then pull it right back to nothing. You just make it very dynamic. You have to have extremes. You can't be subtle through thousands of watts, you have to do it in other ways.

It's a different music form to normal blues and I think it's valid. We got some good results. And after all, all rock 'n' roll is blues based, all jazz is blues based. Whether or not you can hear the blues in it anymore is irrelevant, that's where it all started. There's no reason why you shouldn't dip into it. The album five just does is actually blues-based rock, it incorporates the blue notes and has a blues sensibility.

Can you imagine, if John Bonham was still alive, that Led Zeppelin would still be going?

I can't imagine any group going for that long. Well I suppose The Stones have done it. We were certainly just about to go into a new phase. We'd stripped right the way down again and a lot of crap was behind us by 1980. But who knows? Reunions, oh golly. I'm glad I'm not part of it. This [solo project] is exciting for me, and again there's only me to rely on. I don't have to compromise. I've worked for years and years with other people and now's the time to do my own stuff for a bit. □

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"The adaptation to machine music implies a renunciation of one's own human feelings" — Theodor Adorno, 1941

"We have grown used to connecting machines and funkiness" — Andrew Goodwin, 1988

The pioneers of mechanical music either saw it as a vehicle for superhuman efficiency (Thomas Edison's phonograph) or as a way of transcending the weakness of the flesh and achieving the purity of function of the machine (Luigi Russolo's *intonarumori*). But the ultimate triumph of machine music has been in genres concerned with shaking butts and moving booty. Dance musics like rock 'n' roll and funk are almost always discussed in terms of their 'primitive' and 'natural' characteristics, but this ignores the machine-like qualities of the element that purportedly embodies this naturalism: the rhythm. Although he is now routinely trashed in cultural studies programmes the world over, the German critic and philosopher Theodor Adorno was one of the few commentators who actually got it right. In the 1950s, while America's moral guardians were fretting over the effects of 'jungle music' on their under-seed children, Adorno was warning that 'the standardised method of dance music... suggests the coordinated battalions of mechanical collectivity', and that 'obedience to this rhythm' leads people to 'conceive of themselves as agglutinated with the untold millions of the meek who must be similarly overcome. Thus, do the obedient inherit the earth'. Even if he did see fascism everywhere he looked, Adorno raises a salient point: why have we entrusted to machines that which makes us most human

— moving in time to sound? Perhaps it is the logical outcome of music's often expressed desire for the perfect beat, which is rooted in the drum's historical role as an instrument of war.

Modern popular music was born at the turn of the century in Congo Square, New Orleans, where marching brass bands comprised of freed slaves and immigrants from Haiti and Cuba would congregate on Sundays. One reason for the popularity of the marching band sound was that a large number of decommissioned soldiers ended up in the city after the Civil and Spanish-American Wars, making brass instruments readily available — a fact which served as a constant reminder that the marching band was originally developed as the motor force of the military's killing machine, disciplining and regimenting the troops with metronome beats. If the same beat discipline is at the root of dance music's proximity to mechanisation, the New Orleans bands customised the military's march steps to satisfy their very different needs.

Not as well trained as the mixed-race Creole groups who enjoyed white patronage, the black bands developed a style of playing that was 'hotter' and more rhythmically charged than the European bias band orientations of the Creoles. The gatherings in Congo Square represented the first 'cutting sessions' and the group who played the 'hottest' would take the 'second line' with them as they marched in victory (the second line being the crowd that marched behind the group and clapped, stomped and shouted along with the music). As it became an established pattern, the second



Above: Marching in line, New Orleans, circa 1940
Left: Ziggy Modeliste (second left) and The Meters

the tyranny of

Undercurrents #9:
perfect machine beat

a series of articles uncovering the hidden wiring of 20th century and finds its roots in fife and drum troupes, New Orleans marching



line, musically speaking, was a combination of John Philip Sousa with Latin American clave patterns. This syncopation is at the root of not only jazz but just about every form of African-American music.

Even in the hands of New Orleans's funkist musicians, the second line pattern couldn't escape its mechanical roots. Thanks to his transposition of the local marching band style to the drum kit, Earl Palmer is the father of funk, yet whenever he played regimentation and swing existed in tense communion. His drumming on Dave Bartholomew's 'Messy Bessy', which was recorded in 1949 but only released in 1991, sounds like the fourth



the beat

music. This month, Peter Shapiro goes looking for the bands, Bo Diddley and Kraftwerk

of modern rhythm. Palmer's controlled torrent of triplets and snare rolls anticipated rock 'n' roll, surf music and the funk of James Brown and The Meters. At the same time, his rhythms sounded as though they could be transposed back to a fife and drum band leading the Minutemen against the Redcoats at the Battle of Concord in 1775.

The ground zero of dance music's milanes metaphor is represented by Palmer's performance on Jesse James' "Red Hot Rockin' Blues" from 1958. On this track and Eddie Cochran's "Somethin' Else" (1959) Palmer's punishing percussive volleys were so overwhelming they browbeat Phil Spector into recruiting him for the "wrecking crew" that helped create Spector's wall of sound. Here is the proof that the drill sergeant's precision of Palmer's drumming was primarily responsible for the creation of rock 'n' roll's monolithic backbeat.

Long before Miami and New York had Hispanic populations to speak of, Latin rhythms took hold in New Orleans's cosmopolitan melting pot. At the turn of the century the city had significant numbers of

beat was born. With its chugging momentum, Diddley's first single, 1955's "Bo Diddley," established his trademark rhythm. Everything, including the guitar, which imitated the sound of steel wheels on a track and a steam engine going through a tunnel, was at the service of the beat. "Bo Diddley" may have sounded a bit like the "Little Engine That Could," but by 1956's "Who Do You Love?" and 1957's "Hey Bo Diddley," the Bo Diddley beat had all the forward motion of a Japanese bullet train.

The link between the nose of industry and 'the backbeat you just can't lose' was emphasized by The Stooges. Motown may have appropriated the car industry's production line techniques, but The Stooges harnessed its sound. With their Detroit homebase just down the road apiece from the enormous River Rouge car plant, The Stooges banged metal against metal, emitted enough noxious feedback fumes to set a river on fire and suggested links between machines, sex, animal debasement and technological alienation. Along with The Beach Boys, The Stooges were

Significantly, when they produced "Planet Rock", Arthur Baker, John Robie and Afrika Bambaataa lifted the most futuristic, urban-like element in "Trans-Europe Express" — its melody line. Even though HipHop kids were busy bombing the A Train with their graffiti tags, their imaginations and fantasies were being spurred by video games and computers, just as their parents had been by trains and automobiles. HipHop was the first music to realize that travel wasn't necessarily about physical motion anymore, but a virtual journey inside your own headspace. Thus, for the bottom end of "Planet Rock", Bambaataa and Robie borrowed the beginning of Kraftwerk's "Numbers", from their *Computer World* album, which sounded like the transfer of information between two microchips.

The Kraftwerk fetishism of "Planet Rock" meshed human and machine like no record before it. Its influence rapidly transmitted down Highway I-95 to Florida, where the ultimate fusion of flesh and metal was born in the back rooms of the Orange State's strip clubs. Even though it came out of Fort Lauderdale, MC ADE's 1985 single, "Bass Rock Express", was one of the founding moments of Miami Bass. As its title suggests, the track reimagines "Trans-Europe Express" as a neon-lit nightmare through south Florida's strip malls, complete with additional claves from a Roland TR-808 drum machine, scratching, a vocoded voice listing the equipment used to make the record, a snippet from the theme of the US sitcom *Green Acres*, and an overmodulated synth baseline. Within a couple of years, however, Bass music had become firmly fixated on the female posterior, and while its union of ass and steel may be perilously close to Freud's infamous equation of shit and gold, Bass music is the ultimate victory of mechanical regeneration over human feelings. For all Bass music's claims to innovation, however, its march to victory was marked out decades earlier by the cyborg timekeepers of funk.

According to its self-image, funk is supposed to be greasy, dirty, stinking of sex — the epitome of human earthiness in other words. But funk is as rigid as any current 4/4 in house track and Earl Palmer once again laid down its ground rules with his metronomic precision. However, the finest exponent of the New Orleans swing that eventually mutated into funk was Charles "Hungry" Williams. As the drummer behind Huey "Piano" Smith & His Clowns on records like "High Blood Pressure", "Little Liza Jane", "Everybody's Whalin'" and "Rockin' Pneumonia And The Boogie Woogie Flu", Hungry took the marching band's jambo flavor into more polyrhythmic directions. Hungry swung like crazy, but however far out he went he never forgot the one! "Everything on the one" is funk's only commandment, and those who break it have their own circle in hell, where they are condemned to an eternity in a dentist's waiting room with Perry Como on tap.

Hungry taught the New Orleans mandate to Clayton Filyau, drummer on James Brown's *Live At The Apollo*, and in Filyau's hands the James Brown beat was at its best. On Brown's 1962 single "I've Got Money", perhaps the most intense and electric record of his entire career,



Left to right: Hamilton Bateman, Bo Diddley, James Brown

Caribbean immigrants, and the practices of voodoo and santeria were widespread. Inevitably the clave, the basic 3/2 pattern driving the ceremonial cross-rhythms used to summon the loas and orishas, spread outside the shrines and were integrated into the brass bands. Elsewhere, however, people couldn't afford tubas or drums, so they created basslines by blowing into empty moonshine jugs and made beats by thrashing cheap guitars. The rhythm of life in most of America was created by the railroad, and pre-war blues and Country records were often little more than imitations of the locomotive using jugs and guitars. Listen to The Memphis Jug Band's "KC Moan" from 1929, Darby & Talton's "Freight Train Rumble", also from 1929, or Bill Monroe's 1941 "Orange Blossom Special".

As the funkified marching band sound advanced up the Mississippi from New Orleans, it was smelted with the new piston-pumping train rhythms and the Bo Diddley



Kraftwerk's favourite rock group. Indeed, The Stooges' industrial clangour and motor rhythms are at the heart of the German power plant's greatest record, "Trans-Europe Express". Like Bo Diddley, Kraftwerk created the end of the century's most enduring rhythms by mimicking trains and, later, computers. Where Diddley's guitar was a steam engine moving off in the distance, Kraftwerk's synth lick was the Doppler effect trail left by a French TGV. Sounding more locomotive than any of its competitors, "Trans-Europe Express" is the greatest train song of them all, the final link in the man-machine interface.

Filiyau's rapid, syncopated chatter-notes behind the main beat set the new standard for modern funk drumming. Forget Marquee Gómez, this is live Junglist percussion 30 years before the fact. Filiyau, and every drummer who followed him, hit "the one" with digital accuracy — back in the 60s and 70s they used to get fined if they messed it. From the immaculate stage outfits to the precision-tooled beats, every one of Brown's groups was a well-oiled machine. With Brown policing the hard and fast rules governing the rhythm like a Swiss enforcer, you didn't really need *The Gang Of Four* to spell out the connection between funk and control.

What Filiyau started, The Meters' Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste raised and refined to hitherto unimagined levels of dexterity by combining New Orleans martial rhythms with the JB beat. Modeliste may sound like an octopus behind the kit, but the reason he's such a badass is that he keeps time like Swiss quartz — it's not for nothing that the group is called The Meters. Modeliste played on Labelle's *Nightbirds* album, the record that truly subsumed funk into disco. On its two



Afrika Bambaataa and Soul Sonic Force



Kraftwerk's dummies

regulation into acts imbued with eroticism. "Disco" wrote Hughes, "takes the regular tattoo of the military march and puts it to the sensual purposes of dance music." Of course, this had been happening all along, but with its own self-awareness, and an insistence on the metronomic 4/4 beat, which was added and abetted by the development of the synthesizer and the drum machine, disco made discipline its main attraction. Disco's greatest moment was Donna Summer's "I Feel Love." Dumping on the concept of biology from a great height, producer/arrangers Giorgio Moroder and Pete Belotte cast Summer as a Teutonic ice queen with a machine heart and surrounded her with the most synthetic textures ever heard on a pop record. Through the music of Summer, and artist/producers such as Sylvester and Cerrone, disco fostered an identification with the machine. By strongly identifying with this increasingly mechanical music, gay culture took to it as a release from the tyranny of the natural which demises homosexuality as an aberration, a freak of nature.

Although disco was a world populated by the utterly fabulous, one of its strangest phenomena was Hamilton Bohannon, a straight-faced session musician who used to drum in the Motown touring ensemble. No one has taken "groove" as literally as Bohannon — there are no peaks, no builds, no intensity anywhere in the records he made for Brunswick between 1974–76. Working for the Motown hit factory had left its mark, for Bohannon made dance music like an assembly-line worker — his hypnotic rhythms were so monotonous you could get RSI just listening to them.

Bohannon's drumming regularly was taken up by "the human metronome," Chic's Tony Thompson, whose unwavering timekeeping, synthetic sound and hi-hat hypnotism might have provided the model for Roland when they developed their first drum machines in the late 1970s.

In 1979, a year before Roland's TR-808 came on

the market, Candido's version of Olatunji's "Jingo" would set the pattern for the most novel use of the rhythm box. Remixed by Shep Pettibone into a fierce soundclash between dub effects and percussion pandemonium, "Jingo" tamed the clavé bonk. With the advent of the B&B, US producers like The Latin Rascals and Chris Barbora combined disco and "Planet Rock" to create an android descender called Latin Freestyle. With its angular rhythm lies and woodblock percussion, Latin Freestyle sounded like a cross between Gary Numan and Tito Puente.

Perhaps the most startling example of the meeting of futurism and roots music, however, was Madeline X's 1987 obscurity, "Just That Type Of Girl." Madeline X was a trio of LA vocalists who wanted to be Prince girls. The real star of the show was producer Bernadette Cooper, who was the drummer for the all-female funk troupe Klymaxx. Even more than Freestyle's robotic thumpa, Cooper's drum programming is suggestive of cyborgs playing mbiras, balfons, cowbells and congas in a Kingston dancehall designed by George Lucas.

Unlike "Just That Type Of Girl," which probably owed its existence to the kind of serendipity that occurs when a producer is looking for a new sound to get a leg up on the competition, A Guy Called Gerald tried to make exploit the connection between machines and ancestry. With its atomized beats and gravity-defying Nyabingi drumming, his 1995 *Black Secret Technology* album expanded on his idea that the sampler was a time-machine by explicitly linking ancient African rhythms and more modern funk beats with futuristic breastbeat science to produce, in his words, "france-like rhythms [which] reflect my frustration to know the truth about my ancestors who talked with drums." As Gerald understands, music organizes time with its rhythm and dancing to it is one of the few ways we have to suspend and stretch time. Even more than solar and lunar cycles, rhythm machines are presently the arbiters of time.

best tracks, "What Can I Do For You?" and "Lady Marmalade", the drums are flat and angular; the *N'woro*is swung only implied

Given funk and soul's marching band roots, the kind of severe regimentation advanced by disco was inevitable. The hit factory output at Motown was already close to assembly-line interchangeability when the label released the first two disco records into the world. Eddie Kendricks's 1972 single, "Girl You Need A Change Of Mind," was disco's prototype even though its main beat, which sounded like a snare rather than a kick, was a bit too human (the drummer is noticeably late a couple of times during the track). But no such flaws marred The Temptations' "Law Of The Land," released a year later, in which producer Norman Whitfield made his apocalyptic funk even more dystopic with a strict 4/4 beat that embodied the inevitability of human nature described in the song.

Sceptical of the 'certainties' of the material world, disco once and for all banished the naturalism ascribed to dance music. Academic Walter Hughes has called the music "a form of discipline" in which, along with body building and safe sex, gay men turned the practices of

In the early 1970s reggae underwent dramatic changes. The urgent shuffle beat that had dominated Jamaican music during the late 60s gave way to a slower, more spacious sound whose relaxed and brooding rhythms allowed for a greater degree of contemplation. The sorrowful protest songs and Rastafarian spirituals that characterized The Wailers' collaborations with Lee Perry and their self-produced recordings for the Tuff Gong label would have a revolutionary impact, while in the realm of the instrumental, the most creative and individual sounds were coming from the toes and lungs of Horace Swaby, better known to the world as Augustus Pablo.

In 1971 Pablo's debut session for producer and record vendor Herman Chin-Loy yielded "East Of The River Nile", an atmospheric slice of reggae jazz led by a spirited melodica line that conjured images of biblical African civilizations. Chin-Loy had purchased the bare-boned rhythm track from Lee Perry, but it was Pablo's minor key melody that gave the song its irresistibly mysterious and meditative air. "East Of The River Nile" marked a turning point for the reggae instrumental. More significantly, when it was released as a single the B-side featured a version that would point the way forward to a new world: the seemingly limitless sonic potential of the dub mix.

Pablo consolidated his mastery of the melodica with the "Far East" cadences echoing through his next hit, "Java", recorded for producer Clive Chin towards the end of 1971. The following year the track was voted Instrumental of the Year in Jamaica, and its popularity repeated through the Jamaican diaspora in Canada and the UK. With his inspired melodica playing on both "East Of The River Nile" and "Java", Pablo turned what was ostensibly a child's toy into a viable lead instrument. But as with many of the great breakthrough moments in reggae, the tracks had their origins in a set of fortuitous circumstances.

"It all started when someone lent me a melodica," Pablo recalled when I interviewed him last year during what would turn out to be his last visit to the UK. "a sister, I can't really remember her name. She went to a girls' school where they used the

instrument. I didn't have any so she lent me hers and I used to practise it every day. I went down to Herman Chin-Loy to buy some records for my sound system. Rockers me and my brother Douglas had that sound from when I was a little boy. Herman is somebody who sells records; everybody knows Herman. He asked me if I could play that instrument. I say, 'Yeah', and he came me to the studio. He said he wanted a new sound."

More than just a melodica virtuoso, Augustus Pablo was a renowned keyboard player, a pioneering record producer and a key figure in the evolution of dub. His early collaborations with King Tubby were exemplary works; and with Lee Perry he conducted some of the deepest explorations of dub's cavernous spaces. When he died in Kingston in May of this year, Jamaican music lost one of its most original and creative voices.

Roots of the source

Born Horace Swaby in Kingston on 21 June 1952, he was raised in the lower middle class Havendale district, a stronghold of the conservative Jamaican Labour Party. His accountant father was descended from indentured labourers who had come to Jamaica from India after the abolishment of slavery in the mid-19th century. His mother's ancestors, however, were brought over from Africa as slaves, and Horace would come to identify most strongly with his African roots. His mother kept a piano in the family home on which she would play simple pieces learned from music books. Following her example, Horace began teaching himself to play in his early teens, and was soon jamming with his schoolmates at the noted Kingston College.



FROM PHOTO: THE BANSLOW PHOTO: BETH LINDSAY

original sufferhead

A pioneering dub explorer and melodica virtuoso, the late **Augustus Pablo**'s career spanned the evolution of Jamaican music, from rock steady through roots to the digital age of ragga. David Katz celebrates the life and music of a reggae original





At this early stage his main influence was Donat "Jackie" Mitto, the resident keyboardist at Coxsone Dodd's legendary Studio One. Mitto, who was also partly of Indian extraction, was one of the architects of modern Jamaican music via his work with such trailblazing groups as The Skatalites, The Soul Brothers and The Soul Vendors, and echoes of his expressive organ licks can be heard in several of Swaby's first recordings.

In 1968 the slow, spacious rock steady grooves pioneered by Tommy McCook's Supersonics, the house band at Duke Reid's Treasure Isle label, were giving way to the changed new beats of such forward-thinking producers as Lee Perry, Joe Gibbs and Bunny Lee. Anxious to gain recording experience as a keyboard player, Horace worked a connection with Bob Marley, which secured what would turn out to be an unsuccessful audition for himself and schoolmate Tyrone Downey at Randy's studio. Undeterred, Horace continued to develop his music during the prolonged school absences brought about by the kind of health problems that would dog him throughout his life. Complications from an eye injury brought about a serious case of pneumonia. Its debilitating effects caused him to lose interest in his studies, and eventually his father removed him from school, allowing him to devote himself to music.

The life change was eventually consecrated with his adoption of the stage name Augustus Pablo. Confusingly, he wasn't the first musician to bear this cryptic moniker, as he explained: "Glen Adams [a session keyboards player], he did 'Aquarius One' for Herman Chin-Loy as Augustus Pablo. A lot of people think it's

me, but it's not because Herman is the one that created that name. Anyone could name Augustus Pablo; him say him see it in a magazine in Mexico — it's a Mexican name, so he just take it out to use gimmicks to rule the people. Glen played that organ on 'River Nile' with me too, but he left and went to America the next day."

Melodica battles

So Horace Swaby wasn't the first Augustus Pablo, and neither was he the first reggae musician to use a melodica. Before the 1971 recording of "East Of The River Nile", Peter Tosh had used one on a cut titled "Memphis", but to no great effect. Joe White and Glen Brown's "Merry Up" and Bobby Kalphat's "Counter Punch" were both melodica hits released in the wake of "Java", but neither captured the complex emotions that Pablo was capable of channelling through such a seemingly limited instrument.

Despite the success of "East Of The River Nile", it was the recording of "Java" for Clive Chin that really gave Pablo his big break. Chin was founder of the Impact label and the son of Vincent and Patricia Chin, proprietors of Randy's Record Mart and Recording Studio at 17 North Parade. Despite the fact that he was an old school friend from Kingston College, Pablo suggested that Chin was a difficult man to impress: "I went to him, 'cause looking to build a career I have to go to people. You

wouldn't have people coming to look for you, nobody ever knew what you could do, you have to put out your talent and show them."

The success of "Java" paved the way for Pablo's debut album, *This Is Augustus Pablo*, a stunning instrumental collection unlike anything before it. Previously, the melodia had been used in reggae as a novelty sound, but Pablo's way of playing it tilted instrumental reggae in a completely new direction. On versions of Dillinger's "Dub Organiser" and David Isaacs's "Since You're Gone," Pablo's melodia counterpointed the original vocal lines with strange, exotic melodies; on original numbers like "Arabian Rock" and "Lower's Mood" he offset the melodia parts with parallel clavier lines. The minimal "Pablo in Dub" and a freezeframe cut of Alton Ellis's "Too Late" are two early excursions through the echo chamber; elsewhere, his strongly melodic approach sounds closer to jazz.

On the album Pablo was backed by the same team that had worked on "Java," including bassist Aston "Family Man" Barrett and drummer Lloyd "Tin Legs" Adams. The record's bright, crisp mix was by the former Studio One apprentice engineer Errol Thompson, who also mixed one of the earliest dub albums, 1973's *Java Java Java Java*, which included several cuts of the "Java" single. As far as his own debut album was concerned, Pablo particularly cherished the contributions of Lloyd Adams: "Tin Legs was my drummer then because he knew how to tune the drum set for live music," he asserted. "He play the drum different to everyone else because he had the secret."

As Pablo's fame spread he began providing melodia versions of current hits for Kingston's most prominent producers. For Derrick Harriott he cut Dennis Brown's "Silhouettes" and Harriott's own "The Loser," for the young Gusse Clarke he made versions of Gregory Isaacs's "Loving Pauper" and KC White's "No No No," while Errol Dunkley placed Pablo's melodia on a further version of his popular "Move Star" rhythm.

Pablo invested the money he earned from these sessions in his first forays into self-production, beginning with interpretations of Studio One rhythms on a label he initially called Hot Stuff but later changed to Rockers, the same name as the sound system he ran with his brother Douglas. As he explained it, "The sound was called Rockers because we created that word — the word might be in the dictionary, but we created that Rockers sound from that time till now." The 1973 Rockers single "Cassava Piece" was in the minor key of his "Far East" originals — meditative pieces that cast the mind of the listener elsewhere.

The hired hand

The decision by Glen Adams, the original Augustus Pablo, to move to Brooklyn in 1971 had a direct impact on the Kingston music scene. It left The Walters without a regular keyboardist, until they eventually drafted in Tyrone Downey, Pablo's friend from his Kingston College days. Lee Perry's Upsetters and the Treasure Isle studio house band also found themselves without an organist. As a consequence, Pablo started to get hired as a session player on piano and organ as well as melodia. "I used to play studio musician for Treasure Isle, Bunny Lee and a few other producers," he explained. "I play backup music because they didn't have an organist any more, and Family Man used to help me a lot. I passed through Now Generation — wasn't really in the band, but I played studio musician with them through Herman. We always play in different bands, like The RHT Invincibles, a band formed by a Rastaman who owned a bakery on Spanish Town Road called the Rainbow Healing Temple."

During this period Pablo was hired for sessions that would produce some of the

most memorable reggae of the period. For producer Leonard "Santek" Chin he played keyboards on the 1974 *Harder Shade Of Black* LP, which he also arranged, and cut melodia versions of Horace Andy's "Problems" and "Children Of Israel." Later, he would contribute string-synthesizer parts to Andy's landmark *In The Light* album, though he credited the part bassist Michael Taylor played in achieving the album's distinctive character. "His brethren Myne in Jamaica," he recalled. "Michael Taylor, he's the one who played the bass and created all that sound." *In The Light* was co-produced by Everton Da Silva, and in the late '70s, Pablo would contribute some memorable string-synthesizer parts to tracks by Ricky Grant for Da Silva's New York-based Hungry Town label.

Dub's holy trinity

Dub emerged in the early '70s as a new and uniquely Jamaican art form. Originally relegated to the B-sides of singles, the appearance of dub albums gave producers greater time and space for exploring the sonic variations of their source materials. The distinctive sound of Pablo's early productions was partially the result of the tracks being voiced and mixed in the tiny, fifth-floor studio of Osbourne Ruddock — better known



Cleve Chin



as King Tubby the Dub Master — in the ghetto of Waterhouse. Tubby had set up shop with an obsolete four-track mixer bought from Byron Lee's Dynamic Sound after the latter had upgraded to an eight-track board. Though Tubby's studio was too small for recording rhythm tracks, it could produce some stunning effects when voicing or overdubbing on rhythms brought in from outside. Pablo's work with singer Jacob Miller particularly benefited from the application of Tubby's customised EQ and reverb.

In 1974 the heavily reverberating dub version of "Baby I Love You So," which featured a fairly ordinary vocal by Miller, caught the ear of Chris Blackwell, who issued the single on his island label with the dub as the A-side. Titled "King Tubby Meets The Rockers Uptown", its success prompted the release of an album of the same name, which featured versions of Pablo's productions for Miller and other vocalists, including Paul Whiteman and The Heptones. The album became a landmark in the evolution of dub thanks to its restructured presentation of fragmented, echoing rhythms. Pablo put the disc's success down to his creative interaction with Tubby, who had previously mixed a collection of instrumentals which Pablo had out for Tommy Cowan as *Isle Dub* in 1975. The version album of Horace Andy's *In The Light*, mixed by Prince Jammy at Tubby's studio, marked another high point in the realm of dub, foregrounding the raw, unadorned rhythms laid down by bassist Michael Taylor.

The follow-up to *King Tubby Meets The Rockers Uptown* wasn't released until 1980

Titled *Rockers Meets King Tubby In A Firehouse*, the album didn't quite capture the majesty of its predecessor, but it still stands as a forceful collection of Pablo rhythms enhanced by Tubby's unique equalisation. "It's I and I did organise the sound at Tubby's, and Tubby's a de dub organiser," said Pablo in a simple salutation of the master dub mixer.

Pablo's mid-70s collaborations with King Tubby were released during a period when reggae was dominated by the 'flying cymbal' sound of Bunny Lee's Aggroators, who were trailing Pablo's earlier innovations through dance-orientated recuts of classic Studio One rhythms. In the latter half of the decade many of the same musicians, including bassist Robbie Shakespeare and drummer Sly Dunbar, were working at the Channel One studio as The Revolutionaries, recording further updates of Studio One hits. But the originator of the Rockers sound was now moving in a different and noticeably less commercial direction, recording highly original message music with lesser known musicians, mainly at Harry J's more spacious studio and occasionally at Lee Perry's Black Ark, which was then a focus of dread creativity for the island's most devout musicians.

Pablo had sporadically worked with Perry as far back as 1973, when Scratch was an in-house producer for Dynamic Sound. "That's when he was producing certain songs and we were helping him experiment, me and Lee Perry is friends," said Pablo, who played melodica on classic Perry-produced singles such as Lloyd And The

a track that is still in demand today. Further works with the same artist were occasionally credited to "Paul Blackman" out of deference to the singer's African heritage. In truth he was an old friend of Pablo's from one of the Havendale neighbourhood's more prominent families. "Whiteman is his real name, me and him grow up together in Havendale. His uncle is the Minister of Education in Jamaica."

Conciding with his deepening Rastafarian convictions, Pablo raised his productions to a higher phase during 1974-75 on a solid series of singles by Jacob Miller, which provided some of the source material for the dubs on *King Tubby Meets The Rockers Uptown*. Driven by rhythms that were unlike any others being laid down in Jamaica at the time, "Keep On Knocking", "Who Say Jah No Dread" and "False Rasta" are easily the strongest and most socially relevant songs Miller ever recorded.

After Miller left his stable to achieve greater fame with the more commercial, uptown-based Inner Circle, Pablo found another young protégé named Hugh Mundell, with whom he recorded the excellent debut album *Africa Must Be Free By 1983*. "I met Hugh Mundell one time through Earl Sorteen, he live near Soteen's yard," Pablo recalled. "I saw him at Joe Gibbs's studio one day and they were saying, 'Youth, don't trouble the instruments', so I just carry him outside and give him a little interview. He was singing songs to me, so I just took him to Lee Perry's studio to record two songs the next day, 'Let's All Unite' and 'Why Do Black Men Fuss And

Fight'. The rest of the album was done in Joe Gibbs and Harry J, but Lee Perry's sound is a different sound than everything else. The drummer was Benbow [Anthony Cream], and the Twelve Tribes bass man called Left Toe [Sidney Gussner] played on most of the album. He was my bass man that time there, but Family Man play too, and Chinna [guitarist Earl Smith] play bass on 'Why Do Black Men Fuss And Fight' — a different kind of vibes."

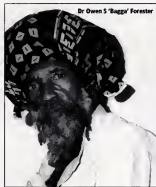
The album was recorded largely during 1976, when Pablo was forced to retreat to the hills for a period after a foot ailment left him unable to walk. When it was finally issued on his Message label in 1978 it drew widespread acclaim, as did its dub version, a stunning piece of studio sorcery which was mixed by Prince Jammy at King Tubby's and released the same year.

Dub in the digital age

At the start of the 1980s Augustus Pablo was producing other strong works with singers Junior Delgado, Norris Reid, Delroy Williams and the group Tetrack. Bob Marley's death in 1981 produced a catharsis in reggae, bringing the curtain down on the roots period. Meanwhile at Channel One, the popular Roots Rudies group were pioneering the mechanised rhythms which would come to be known as dancehall and which would eventually dominate Jamaican music. Conciding with this shift, Pablo reached a crossroads of his own with his 1983 release *King David's Melody*. While the first half of the album featured the classic Rockers rhythms for which he was so revered, the second contained more dancehall-orientated tracks. The final number, a recut of the much loved "Kent Road" rhythm, included a rhythm box in the arrangement, an innovation which predicted the changes that would sweep through reggae with Prince Jammy's 1985 production of Wayne Smith's totally computerised "Sking Teng".

"Sking Teng" impacted with such force that it changed the focus of Jamaican music: entirely drum machines and computerised rhythms instantly became the order of the day. Though Pablo had long been experimenting with drum machines in his home rehearsal space, he would never fully embrace computerisation and often complained about the subsequent demise of live recording in Jamaica. He noted that his approach to rhythm remained the same, whether he was creating a digital track or using live drums: "I just play the beat and try to create the sound with that beat. I only use it to hold artists in time, so the artist can know what to do in timing."

Poor health seriously restricted the flow of Pablo material in 1984-85, but he sprang back with a vengeance in 1986. He spent some weeks in America, playing



Groovers' "Our Man Flint" and The Getherers' "Words Of My Mouth".

Perry later allowed Pablo to use his studio for material he was recording with singer Hugh Mundell in return for his contributions to Scratch's own works in progress. Tantalously, Pablo recalled a legendary album of Black Ark material recorded for Island but which has yet to see the light of day. The delicious "Vibrate On" and the dense, reverberating "Jama Lova", a recut of "Jawa", are the only tracks to surface so far. "Lee Perry gave me some studio time 'cause I always stick by him and help him out on a lot of tracks," Pablo recalled. "I was supposed to do an album for him later with Chris Blackwell, Blackwell was supposed to take this LP, but he didn't get it and I don't know where that tape is. It was finished, but that's the same time Scratch started going on a year. People was fighting him and he decided just to throw all different card, you have spiritual wickedness in high and low places, but spiritual wickedness can be invisible."

Other Pablo/Perry collaborations appeared on Pablo's excellent *East Of The River Nile* album, with Perry's wall of delay transporting the spiritual sounds to an even higher plane through the extreme application of phaser.

Dread at the controls

Perhaps Augustus Pablo's true forte resided in his skills as a record producer, either on his own instrumental tracks or for singers such as Jacob Miller. He began producing vocalists towards the end of 1973 with Paul Whiteman's moving "Say So",

live to capacity audiences and recording digital rhythms in New York, some of which surfaced on the *Abeng Sun* album. He also travelled to Japan, where devoted audiences presented him with new melodies and ancient fuses. Back in Jamaica he cut an exceptional album with Junior Delgado, titled *Raggamuffin Year*, it fused Delgado's heightened sense of melody with a digital toughness that perfectly suited Delgado's gruff vocals. In 1987 Pablo went out on tour with Delgado and protégés Yami Bolo and White Mice. "That year I got 'Tour of the Year', got some heavy, sweet reviews," he recalled. "White Mice and Bolo and all of us. Them days there it's Pablo come up with packages, you notice the world is going with package now? I took it to Japan and all around, and I split up my money, share with my brethren. I'm not thinking of myself like some people, because I don't need to get rich."

Pablo and Delgado recorded a second album together, *One Stop More*. It might not have been as successful as its predecessor, but it still contained some well-crafted

foreign companies which refused to option the album. "Maybe they don't love King Selassie-I or they just feel like lighting that album, because it's 21 tracks with about four Nyabingi songs?"

The spirit is willing

Despite worsening health Pablo continued to record, produce and tour. Shortly before his death he was working with a number of UK based female vocalists at Neil 'Mad Professor' Fraser's *Are We Mad* studio in South London. "I have some vocal power there. I'm working on, whole heap of different artists — artists like ran," he explained. "I'm doing an LP with Asha, I released a song with her called 'Give A Little Love' in Jamaica. I did it live in Mad Professor's studio. He wanted to give me drum machine again, he was saying, 'We don't do live drum set', and I said, 'You're crazy, go for the

drum set and just set up everything', and I made him do it. I have a lot of English singers. I'm producing here, like some next singers called Ras Angels, four daughters from London. I'm producing a daughters LP also, just pure woman."

Unfortunately, such projects were cut short when Pablo succumbed to the nerve disease Myasthenia Gravis. He had long eschewed Western medicine, preferring the alternative treatments prescribed by his personal Rastafarian herbalist, Dr Owen S 'Bagga' Forrester of the *Hawthorn Herbal Research Company*. Something of a legend in Jamaica, Bagga uses herbal preparations to treat disorders of the lymphatic nodes. Pablo spoke of Bagga with great reverence, noting that his treatments eased his suffering and improved his condition.

However, just how far Pablo's health had deteriorated became evident when he faltered on stage during a performance at the Briton Academy last year; a subsequent French concert was cancelled after he fell violently ill before taking the stage. He retreated to the rural sanctity of Lawrence Tavern and continued taking Bagga's medicine, but he was unable to reverse the decline. He died in a Kingston hospital on 18 May.

Throughout his life the constant motivating force behind his music was his fervent belief in Rastafarianism, which made a mysterious appearance in his life at an early age. "It was from creation, because Jah created me from creation," he told me. "I realised it when I was a little youth coming up, I can't really tell when."

His faith was so unwavering that he often credited The Almighty as producer of his albums, assigning himself the secondary role of executive producer.

Asked about his working methods, he sought to emphasise the spontaneous, organic processes that always shaped his music. "Music is there and I just take my instrument and play," he asserted. "It's no miracle thing or nothing like that, just natural vibes and heart. Everybody look 'pon the past and wonder how we plan this out, but it wasn't no planning, it was just Jah vibes. Now that everybody get big off that, everybody acting like they're professional, but it was just natural vibes — anybody tell you anything else is a lie they're telling." □

“Music is there and I just take my instrument and play. It's no miracle thing or nothing like that, just natural vibes and heart”

Blowing *The Wind*, a meditative instrumental set that placed Nyabingi's hand drumming on top of subtle electronic rhythms. Released in the midst of the digital sickness and gun talk then predominant in reggae, Pablo described it as a reaction to the changes computerisation had brought to Jamaica's recording studios. "It's not really digital rhythms, it's just that when we went to the studio they were saying that they're not doing no live recording again. Everybody gone crazy, after the world make it through live music, they just bring in computers, so I'm against them who invented it. When I went to the studio they say, 'Can't do live music, strictly computers', strictly this and strictly that, so I put out 'Bright music and them things there.' Ironically, later in the decade many reggae producers began using more cultural sounds, incorporating Nyabingi's drums in otherwise digital recordings.

Meanwhile Pablo's popularity continued to reign supreme in Japan, where a 1991 Tokyo performance was documented on a live album. He also contributed to Patrick Andrade's *Are This Time* project, which fused Native American, African-American and African-Caribbean rhythms. As the decade continued, Pablo's studio output slowed, and some of his releases began to miss the mark. His rhythms for Lloyd Hemmings's *The Healer Has Come* were occasionally lacklustre, and Earl Sostren's *Them A Readers* was recorded too hastily. "I came to London and when I saw Earl Sostren he was down, and I started to uplift him and give him spiritual strength," said Pablo by way of explanation. "From that I invite him to Jamaica and did that album in two weeks — I never really did that before in my life, but through I had the money I just did it, normally it takes years."

A few two-dimensional dub albums, including *Raggamuffin Dub* and *Beat Street Dub*, sounded weak and uninspired, as did the digital glare of *Heiratical Chant*. Though his final release, the double *King Selassie-I Calling*, was more successful, it failed to secure a licensing deal outside of Jamaica. "Them try to fight me, try to break down me spirit and two times Jah just make me win them all," he said, referring to the



Augustin Pablo, 1978



Gang Starr on the roof
at D&D Studios

For a decade **Gang Starr** — DJ Premier and MC Guru — have refined HipHop to new levels of complexity and sophistication, channelling pioneering beats and content rich raps deep into the veins of black music.

Words: Sasha Frere-Jones

Photography: Martyn Gallina-Jones

reality check

D8D Studios is located in the West 30s of New York's Manhattan, in the garment district. It's a grimy, unappealing area, characterised by blocks of industrial loft buildings and wholesale fabric storefronts. The studio itself is equally downscale: a sign in the bathroom asks clients not to urinate on the walls. Sleeves of HipHop 12's line the walls of the main area. The lighting is minimal and the couches show more stuffing than leather. The studio is equipped with a pool table, snacks and drinks machines, and the TV in the reception area is showing *A Bronx Tale*. All rather unimposing for a music space that is the HipHop equivalent of the Sun, Chess and Black Ark studios rolled into one.

DJ Premier, born Christopher Martin but referred to by those who know him well as Pemo, has spent a good portion of the past seven years watching the sun come up at D8D. Best known as one half of Gang Starr, alongside MC Guru, he has secured one of HipHop's few unimpeachable reputations as a staggeringly prolific and constant freelance producer. He has cut tracks for most of HipHop's major latter day players, unknown independent MCs, and even Miss Janet Jackson. In all, Premier has been responsible for some of the most sophisticated and influential music to emerge this decade, much of it recorded right here at D8D.

"It started heating up with the HipHop shit in '92 when Premier came in to do [Gang Starr's] *Daily Operation*," explains Dave Lotwin, one of the owning Ds in D8D. Lotwin is one of the few other white people in the studio, a big, bearded man with a close beard and an almost bald head. He's relaxed, familiar with everyone and, like Premier, exudes no surplus street attitude. Listen to "Aight Chill" * from Gang Starr's 1994 album *Hard To Earn* and you'll hear Lotwin leaving a message on Premier's answering machine. "Before that we did a tremendous amount of reggae," he continues. "That's how I got started, I was on tour with Peter Tosh, and as soon as I got off we started D8D in 1983."

Last month saw the release of a compilation titled *The Real HipHop: The Best Of D8D Studios Volume 1*, which brings together some of the tracks that secured the studio's reputation, fully half of them involving Premier.

"This is the testing ground," confirms the DJ/producer, who made the link between his own music and the D8D operation explicit in 1994 by producing a 12" single on Anista called "1, 2 Pass It" for The D8D All Stars (which included KRS-One among many others). "I always bring the basic idea here," he continues, "and see if it sounds right in that room, being that I'm so tuned to it. If it sounds right in the room I'll add all the little flavours, lay scratches, get vocals down and try to mix the same day, depending on how difficult the song is. If it wasn't for them there's no telling how my music would be sounding."

Gang Starr have been signed to Virgin USA since the 1997 *Moment Of Truth* album. Last month the label released *Full Clip* (on Cooltempo in the UK), a double CD compilation of the duo's work over the past decade. Greatest hits albums often feel like contractual obligations, but *Full Clip* is an exception. Though it is short on the group's stranger moments, it is surprisingly well curated. It also serves the valuable function of collating together B-sides that are not just hard to find but worth hearing — a life lived without a copy of "D.W.Y.O.K." is a life somehow compromised. Most significantly, *Full Clip* effectively reasserts Gang Starr's position in the HipHop canon, pushing them up into the top rank, while making a strong case for their continuing relevance. The new title track

neatly sums up Premier's recent, ongoing obsession with clipped guitar phrases. After a few listens it sounds like their best album. Which is saying something.

Premier arrives for the interview ready for work, bearing two album-sized silver flight cases. He's stocky, medium height, wearing a T-shirt, crisp jeans and very clean Timberland boots. He jokes with the people walking in and out of the studio's various rooms. He doesn't act like a star, and it's hard to believe he's blown off numerous interview requests over the past 18 months. It becomes clear why, however, when he tells me who he has been working with of late, reciting off a list of names that sounds like a rollick of the HipHop Nation circa 99: Rakim, Rah Digga, Mos Def, Screwball, Ed O.G., the late Big L, Showbiz, AG, Buckwold, Diamond D, Fat Joe, DC, Ghetto Dwellas, Milano, Ali Ra, Big Shug, Canibus.

"Yeah, I'm overloaded," he says, adding, "I haven't really been enjoying the stuff I've been doing lately. They're just more traditional Premier tracks. They'll still be dope, ready for the stores and DJs, but not to the point of where I'm really impressed with. I like to top myself over and over. I'm trying to get deeper with the beats and catch

brother's name was Gang Starr T, and Guru said, 'I wanna use that name', so he added another 'T' to it and called the group Gang Starr. Guru had a 12" called 'The Lesson', produced by Donald O, it came out in 1986. Then they all did 'Bust A Move' with DJ Mark The 45 King in B7. They did some more singles all produced by 45 King, real dope. 45 King also produced 'Gusto' and 'Knowledge' [which were subsequently included on *No More Mr Nice Guy*]. [Damo and 12B Down] didn't want to go through the payin' dues and hard times to maintain a career so they went back to Boston. They left Guru in New York, Guru thought until he made it in New York he's not gonna stop. He wanted that acceptance because at that time New York was the total dominant force in HipHop.

"A friend of mine named Carlos Garza worked at the record store in Houston that carried all the latest 12's. I used to go there to get my records to do my little parties, 'cause I was DJing at school. He knew Stu Fine and kept telling him, 'Yo, there's this dude out here, he's dope, he could spin, he does beats and all that.' I wasn't that good at beats then but I thought they were dope. I was called Waxmaster C and I was in a group called ICP, Inner Circle Posse. We used to be called MCs in Control. Carlos sent

one of my demo tapes to Stu. Guru and Gang Starr was already down with Wild Pitch. Guru heard and loved my demo, so they flew me in. Thanksgiving holiday, we did 'Manifest' and from there, it was on."

Today, most of *No More Mr Nice Guy* sounds stiff and relatively lo-fi, making it the only Gang Starr album that doesn't hold up. Premier and engineer Shlomo Sonnenfeld loop the James Brown and Moters records, sometimes panning the drum machine hi-hats to one side and the sampled loop to the other. Guru, not fully grown into his patrician persona, sports readymade rhymes: "Manifest" and "Jazz Music", the tune that would catch Spike Lee's ear, stand out, but "DJ Premier In Deep Concentration", an example of the instrumental DJ cut then common on albums by peers like Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince, EPMD and Public Enemy, is probably the only track you would put on a mixtape now.

"The only reason I started doing producing is 'cause I knew DJing wasn't gonna pay the bills, pay for the good things I wanted in life," says Premier. "I knew if I was gonna get \$D per cent of the money, split it with Guru, I gotta do more than just scratch for him. He's writing rhymes and performing, what else I'm gonna do besides just spin his records and scratch on the records?" I said, "Let me learn how to do production." For *[No More Mr Nice Guy]* Shlomo helped me do everything. I would tell him, 'Loop that, loop that', and he'd

take it, play it back and say, 'You want that much?' I'd say, 'Cut off some more' or 'Extend it some more', and then he'd lay it down and tell me, 'DK, you just hit these pads' [on the sampling drum machine] and I would do it. He would throw in a kick or snare and we'd look at each other and smile. Sometimes it was right. To me the first album has that type of a sound, it's me and a little bit of Shlomo. *Step In The Arena*, that was the first time it was really on me."

Step In The Arena, Gang Starr's second album released in 1990, was one of the most significant HipHop records of the decade, and a grandfather to much of the TripHop, downtempo, broken beats, call-it-what-you-like HipHop-derived music produced in Europe in the 90s. The backwards stacc and sleepy beats of "Beyond Comprehension" could be a new Mr Wax or Ninja Tune single. On "Who's Gonna Take The Weight?" Premier pitch-shifts a continuous tone on his turntable to create a melody, now it's a trick in every turntablist's box, but then it was a left hook. The springy bass funk of "Execution D A Chump" sounds like the prequel to PolyRhythmic Addicts' recent "Motion 2000" single, produced by young lion DJ Spinna. And long before DJ Spooky, Lucazo and every lazy remixer had borrowed a chunk of it, Premier sampled Jean-Jacques Perrey's analogue funk micro-masterpiece "EVA" for "Just To Get A Rep." As a consequence, "EVA" now has a sonic profile as familiar as the modulated feedback of ESG's "UFO", the



DJ Premier

everybody off-guard again. I don't think I've had one of those lately. I wanna do another one like "You Know My Steez", that one sounded just the way I imagined it. It didn't sound like anything out there at the time."

"You Know My Steez" was one of the pivotal tracks on *Moment Of Truth*, but Premier could also have been referring to the very first Gang Starr single, "Words I Manifest", originally released on Stu Fine's Wild Pitch label and later included on the duo's 1989 debut album, *No More Mr Nice Guy*.

"Manifest" was an exception to HipHop's late 80s party line of rigid BDB beats and "Payback" samples. Articulating a subdued but dense aesthetic distinct from dominant sounds such as Hank Shocklee's housing Public Enemy producers and Prince Paul's Day-Glo tinted work with De La Soul, Premier's beat bounces between conga and guitar drops and tight scratches. The chorus quotes "A Night In Tunisia", the last time a well-known melody would provide the hook for one of Premier's tracks. Guru rhymes clearly, enunciating mildly positive sentiments. The track improves as it plays on, a signal of funk understood and well-executed, but listening now, mostly it works as a piece of what was to come.

"Gang Starr were all from Boston, I'm originally from Houston, Texas," explains Premier. "The group used to be Guru and another MC named Damo-D Sko and they had a DJ named 12B Down, if you say it fast it's 'Wanna be down'. 12B Down's

shouts on Rob Base's "It Takes Two", or the vocoder splash at the end of B-52's "Change The Beat".

"Perey was not bitter about that," says Premier. "He was at a convention, talking about how he thinks me for using his record, because it brought him back to life. Now he's on commercials with the music, so I know he's getting a little cheque."

More than anything *Stop In The Aero* signalled the transformation of Premier's production into one of HipHop's most durable memes. Premier's production consolidates and shapes the James Brown and jazz samples from *Nice Guy* into a sleek, oblong thump.

"We did that at Firehouse in Brooklyn with engineer Yoram Vazan, who used to be partners with Shlomo," he explains. "I was learning how to sample and use the machine myself. I was using an Akai S950 [sampler]. I do that now, I trigger with my MPC 60 [drum machine/sequencer]. That way I'm limited in what I can do, it keeps me trying to figure out a fresh way to make a sample work within a small timeframe. I've always used the same gear. A lot of people think I've got tons of equipment but I just use an Akai S950, which is old school, an MPC 60, my mixer and a big radio I have from back in the day that has never blown a speaker or nothing. And it pumps. I don't even use big speakers in the crib."

Guru's work on "Just To Get A Rep" established his style, breaking him into the wider HipHop consciousness. In measured rhymes he explains how and why "stupid kids" need to get a reputation. It was HipHop with morals but without any judgmental knuckle-rapping. It works now for the same reason it became a street hit then, for the reason many Gang Starr tunes are still in rotation: the beat is unstoppably liquid and Guru just sounds cool. Thinking of this track in the context of the kind of banal violence which defines today's commercial rap market reminds me that there are few gratuitously violent or negative songs in the Gang Starr catalogue. I ask Premier whether this was a conscious move.

"I don't want to talk about how hardcore I am and how I can bring it to you all the time," he replies. "Guru has to speak for me too. Sometimes people approach me and say, 'What did he mean by such and such?', and I don't want to say, 'You got to talk to him, he wrote the rhyme', I want to be able to say, 'He means this', because I want to be able to back him up in his words. You gotta watch how you motivate because the camera's definitely on, so move accordingly."

When he arrives at D&D Guru, born Keith Elam, is wearing glasses, blue sweatpants, a pair of very clean Timberland boots and a white tanktop, showing plenty of muscle and tattoo. During our brief interview he carefully transfers telephone numbers written on napkins and club flyers into a small notebook. If



[one of the three new songs on *Full Clip*], he says. "That's a straight ghetto song about a drug dealer whose girlfriend sleeps with his homieboy, who then conspires to rob him. That's as ghetto as you can get, but still there's a moral and a message to it. That's the difference between the way I write and the way other people write. At the end of the day you gotta be happy with yourself, because your lyrics come back to you."

"There's a moral and a message to it. At the end of the day you gotta be happy with yourself, because your lyrics come back to you."

a reason why everyone thinks the world is gonna end in 2000. There's a reason for the mentality of so much negativity with rappers getting killed, that's a sickness, somebody's gotta address it."

Do you know what the reasons are?

"It has to do with a lack of self-esteem, that we're living in troubled times, employment structures are failing, the educational system is failing. We don't ask for guns and crack to be in our communities but they are. There's a lot. These are things I address by my just being Guru, period."

Premier in conversation is a craftsman chatting amiably on the porch, Guru is a wary spokesman in the spotlight.

Remembering Premier's comments about his lyrics, I quote from the new single lifted from *Full Clip*, "Discipline." "Instead of preaching death in my songs, I breathe life." Is that a comment on other rap?

"Sure, why not? Sure it is. It's cool to talk about murder and guns and I know about that same shit, but somebody's gotta shed some light on the subject. That's what I do, what I always have done."

"Some of them are battle rhymes. 'Full Clip' is a battle rhyme and it is about being harder than the next man. I mean, you have to have those type of rhymes or you won't survive in this business, because that's the basis of MCing, battling."

Imagine Bronx Yale actor Chazz Palminteri as a rapper, the man of the house taking care of business without once raising his voice, and you'll have an idea of Guru at the mic. His rasping baritone and even delivery stood out from the beginning (see "Mostly Tha Voice" from the 1994 album *Hard To Earn*, a battle rhyme dedicated to his physical gift). Not a language MC or technician, Guru is a content rapper, another near extinct breed. Whether it's the each-one-teach-one Gangstays of 1990's "Who's Gonna Take The Weight?", or 1994's "Tonz Of Guns", which compared US international military aggression to inner city violence, Guru's rhymes (or as he calls them on "Flip The Script", "clear thoughts") have specific intentions and are doled out carefully. Over time he has committed himself to working as a social MC, not a clothes horse or dubious screen personality.

"I have songs that I'll rhyme about some straight streets shit on, like 'All 4 The Cash' [one of the three new songs on *Full Clip*], he says. "That's a straight ghetto song about a drug dealer whose girlfriend sleeps with his homieboy, who then conspires to rob him. That's as ghetto as you can get, but still there's a moral and a message to it. That's the difference between the way I write and the way other people write. At the end of the day you gotta be happy with yourself, because your lyrics come back to you."

"There's so much going on, there's so much shit that's wrong with the mentality of my people, I feel like it's my obligation to get some messages across," he continues. "There's a reason why there's black-on-black crime, a lack of role models for the kids, there's



In 1993 Guru stepped out of the Gang Starr arena to front a project called *Jazzmatazz*, the album that made HipHop safe for The Gap and gave Donald Byrd a second career. Featuring Byrd, Lonnie Liston Smith and Roy Ayers alongside Acid Jazz icons like N'Dea Davenport and Courtney Pine, the record seemed to be a logical outcropping of the jazz-HipHop connection, which has been linked to Gang Starr since the beginning. It was made explicit by the inclusion of "Jazz Music" in the soundtrack of Spike Lee's newsmag 1990 jazz romance *Mo' Better Blues*.

"When Gang Starr started," Guru says, "it was when all the James Brown beats were ending, the sampling. What's the next thing? It was getting monotonous. People like Premier, Q-Tip, Large Professor, Showbiz, Diamond D, those guys were at the forefront of that era of sampling jazz. Those were the next records that were in the crate. If it had been Country and Western records they would have used that, but it happened to be jazz. A lot of those records blend easily with HipHop beats, the atmosphere they create when coupled with a hard beat."

"When we did that song for *Mo' Better Blues* people started labeling us jazz rappers and I didn't like that, because Gang Starr is something totally beyond that, or gangsta rap or anything else. It's reality based, message-oriented music. I said, 'OK, since we are some of the pioneers of this sort of sound, why don't I do a project and get the jazz acts that we sampled to actually come in and jam over some HipHop tracks.' It took the label off of Gang Starr. It was almost a sacrifice."

In the UK and Europe critics and DJs constructed the 'jazz rap' tag by paying attention to the records being sampled. (Had they done so five years earlier, they could have coined another subgenre: TV rap.) But if a producer like Premier has any link to jazz it's via the transmission that occurs during the sampling process. The meat and potatoes of many a jazz player's set is still archaic Tin Pan Alley pop tunes. In the same spirit, HipHop producers like Premier have made banging, streetcleaner beats from irremediable tracks (think Ben Sidran, Billy Squier). If the MC has any viable link to jazz, it might be through his responsibility to run squiggly lines over the sequencer grid of sampled beats, providing motion and variety.

"Yes, it seems that way to me too," says Guru. "HipHop isn't jazz. Jazz has a lot more changes. The MC is most like jazz, as far as freestyling. That's like a guy picking his horn up playing his feelings."

In spite of his reservations about the jazz rap tag, there was a second volume of *Jazzmatazz*, subtitled *The New Reality*, and next year Virgin will be releasing volume three in the sequence. "I'm calling the next volume *Street Soul*," says Guru. "I'm gonna keep it as street as possible, that's where my mind is at, that's where my heart is right now."

While Guru was pulling together the first *Jazzmatazz* project, Premier was working on tracks for Juru The Damage, Notorious B.I.G., Group Home, Nas, KRS-One, M.O.P., even Ninet Cherry. He also flirted with a jazz rap pigeonhole by producing some of Branford Marsalis's 1994 release *Buckshot Le Forquer*, a moderately successful combination of instrumental jazz and HipHop beats. (In fact Premier and Guru lived in Branford's house in Front Greene, Brooklyn between 1992-94, "driving him crazy," says Premier.)

Meanwhile, Premier's 1992 production on *Daily Operation* had already positioned the triumphs of *Step In The Arena* in a new light. On "Ex Girl To Next Girl" Guru's callow narrative and Premier's horn charts are pure pop, but underneath the dry but dense drum sounds is the first iteration of a style that would later show up in the surgically scrubbed beats of DJ's Vadim and Knush "Soliloquy Of Chaos" and "Take It Personal" show Premier's love for dissonance emerging, whines and bleeps floating above clipped kickdrum sounds. Contrast is Premier's new tool, as he combines samples from records that never got played at any party, anywhere (unless chemists dance). The apprenticeship is over, JB and Kool & The Gang are officially off the payroll and a new B-boy language takes shape.

Premier's fertile period between 1992 and the 1994 production of *Hard To Earn* resulted in an incredible body of work and also what could be fairly called a formula. Premier codified the use of low to midrange frequencies, making HipHop sonically distinct from the booming low end of reggae and Miami Bass music or the shrill high-mids of most dance music. His kickdrum sounds are frighteningly clear, syncopating on or around the third beat. The chorus is usually punctuated by one or two scratches,

often of the artist's name. His samples sound like samples, audibly cutting out and in, converting the lockstep nature of sequences into a rhythmic signature. Where a peer producer like Pete Rock creates virtual soul groups in the sampler, writing beats that roll under smooth basslines and horn charts, Premier's music is made of spikes, individual chunks of sound interlarded with bits of space. His funk is harder but there's also more room for the MC.

The peak of Premier's 92-94 period is a pair of productions for Gang Starr associate Jeru Tha Damaja. For "Come Clean," Jeru's 1993 debut single on Payday, Premier creates deep space using a Shelly Marne woodblock pattern, a suitably menacing beat and an Onyx scratch for the chorus — and that's it. There's nothing else in the track but Jeru's stentorian, endlessly quotable rhyme. For the follow-up single, "O' Original," Premier set up the kickdrums like sandbags, firing off dissonant piano clusters like anti-aircraft fire. For the chorus, Bernard Hermann is wrestled to the ground flailing. Jeru talks about his pineal gland and Rott Rooter. Rendered thus, HipHop sounds like the only music on the goddamn planet.

On *Hard To Earn* Premier's style is at a synaptic peak, drawing noises and beats from completely unknown sources to create his jazzius. The texture is dark with silver flecks, and Guru's voice is recorded better than ever before. It's cohesive, a physical pleasure, and features one of their hidden gems, "Brainstorm," a breakneck drum gallop full of Morse code and dive bombs, Guru at his most commanding.

Moment Of Truth was Gang Starr's first album for Noo Trybe/Virgin, their first gold record and a comprehensive overview of their style combined with the grittier, guitar-heavy tracks which Premier had been giving to his friends. The lead-off single, "You Know My Steez," had the impact of "Come Clean" or "Just To Get A Rep." Distorted drums from the live "Flash To The Beat" bootleg ping-pong with guitar slabs from Joe Simon's "Drowning In A Sea Of Love." "Work" and "The Milba" are excellent variations on this freerack guitar style.

Critics and fans declared the album some sort of comeback, though that seemed more good intentions than good reporting, as it's their least consistent album since *No More Mr. Nice Guy*. The fact that this was their first album to go gold only lends support to the group's contention that their earlier releases were mishandled, not underappreciated.

"We got jerked in the beginning, had to get out of old contracts," spits Guru. "Everybody thinks we're rich because we had mad respect in the streets but we didn't have a gold record until *Moment Of Truth*, and that's preposterous. Obviously somebody wasn't doing something right, whether it's marketing or promotion. It's frustrating to be more popular than the money in your pocket. Motherfuckers could be wanting to stick me up 'cause they think I'm rich and what if I don't even have it?"

By 1997 Premier's style had spawned enough imitators to qualify it as HipHop's standard practice. Dilated Peoples' Evidence, Kool Keith associate Kut Masta Kurt, Lootpack's MadB, and The Alchemist were all turning in active, thumping rhythm patterns and truncated soul quotes. (Many thought Kurt's guitar-heavy beat for Dilated Peoples' 1998 single "Work The Angles" was a Premier job.) The patented stabbing style even went above ground with Timbaland, another producer unafraid of letting digital sound signal and short stay short.

Premier is well aware of all this secondary activity. "Starting to be a lot of cats coming with a similar style, like you said, the stabbing thing, the little short samples, chopping at the snare or kick. Now it's starting to become the normal thing. It doesn't annoy me, it just lets me know that that style's appreciated and I got to try to find a different style. There's always a time when you got to change up. I'm getting into

learning how to play keyboards."

I ask him if he's going to go the way of The RZA and current best ruler Swizz Beats (DMX, Jay-Z, Eve) and leave samples behind.

"You know I'll bring that funk," he replies. "It goes through different phases. Timbaland came out with a style that changed the whole HipHop game. Now everybody's doing Timbaland's style. Everybody. He's like the most bitten producer right now. But I'm going to stay with the samples. That keyboard just doesn't bring that HipHop sound that I'm known for. Samples are dope. My style is definitely B-boy, definitely head-knocking and original. I think I'm one of the most original producers that sample as far as being able to recreate a track and change it into a whole new atmosphere from what was intended by the original artists."

D Premier finds brilliance in being a workman, the one who takes every job seriously, finding new ways to build palaces in small plots of land. He is responsible for more than half the houses on HipHop's block and he did it by being consistent, not by one-upping the producers before him. He has never been a



Guru

provocateur. His mission, consistent through all his stylistic modifications, is to put the raw material of HipHop, other people's records, under the microscope and research their logic. What beats are funky and why? How many different things can you combine without losing the plot? Like a good commercial film composer such as Carter Burwell, Premier keeps the action moving while leaving room for his signature style. He might fill his tracks with sonic diversions, from the dissonant drones on "ALONGWAYTOGO" or the concrete sounds on "2 Deep," but he always keeps Guru's voice centre stage, reasserting Gang Starr's group identity all the way.

Both he and Guru's work is channelled into the creation of HipHop as a distinct genre, a deep, rich vein of black music with its own logic. Both of them stressed that their music was not to be hyperliterate, that it was simply HipHop. This is a more complex statement than it at first sounds. No matter what or who they borrow or reference, Gang Starr use HipHop as their syntax, their engine and their logic. Their music moves like HipHop and HipHop only, and if you seek to hear it through other music, you'll miss some of the most important motion of the last decade.

"I'm happy with the recognition I get now," says Premier. "I'm not looking for any more than that. I'm not crying like 'We don't have Grammy', or 'We're not platinum'. We know that the streets love us. That, and my family and all that, motivates me." □ Full Clip is out now on Coolestrope. The Real HipHop: The Best Of D&D Studios Volume 1 is out now on D&D/Cold Front/K-Tel.

sound check

Up for it: September's selected albums and 12"ss

- Aphrodite
- Luciano Berio
- Breathless
- Peter Brötzmann & Friends
- Gavin Bryars
- Matt De Gennaro & Alastair Galbraith
- Die Like A Dog Quartet
- Die Trip Computer Die
- Dorgos & Lára Cromwell
- Marc Ducret
- Luc Ferrari
- David Grubbs & Mats Gustafsson
- High Rise
- Incapacitants
- Lydie Kavka
- Lee Kaeft/Steve Swallow/ Paul Morion
- Ulys
- Rhytm Plak
- Marc Oer: A Tribute To The Skip Spence Album
- Joe Morris
- Plume On Mars
- u-Zq
- Sunny Murray & Sabir Muteeb
- Musica Transmica
- New Flesh For Old
- Non
- Paul Panhuyson
- Kimron Pohjonen
- Iggy Pop
- Eddie Prevost Quartet
- Eddie Prevost & Varyan Weston
- Quannan
- Terry Riley
- Royal Trux
- Archie Shepp/Kahlil El Zabar's Ritual Trio
- Alan Silva & Marilyn Parker
- Solex
- Alexander Spence
- Spontaneous Music Ensemble
- Three Themselves
- Toho Sara
- Adrian Utley & Mount Vernon Arts Lab
- DJ Vadim
- Ye Ben

Plus new compilations, reissues, event track, classical, critical beats, electronics, global, jazz and outer limits releases in brief

Aphrodite

Aphrodite

VA WNR 009222 CD

Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, might be a peculiar choice of pseudonym for a male Junglist from South London, but the hallmark of Gavin King's style has always been its roots in human physicality. More plainly, Aphrodite knows that dancing is all about a primal display of sexuality and that dance music, at its most potent, is an aphrodisiac. Which makes his debut album — in reality an anthology of tracks from his vaults gathered together with a few new tunes and some brief, Ambient interludes, all seemingly missed into one long journey — particularly welcome at a time when the factionalization of drum 'n' bass renders it increasingly irrelevant.

From Aphrodite's clear-eyed perspective, the genre is experiencing no such problems. His records argue that all you have to do is make the bass more physical, the drums more percussive, go after the intensity and the groove back that made Jungle the most exciting musical development of the decade and your music will make people move in the process it will guarantee its own survival.

As the tracks gather speed, more elements are sucked into the bloodstream of the rhythms, spinning and shaking in the tailwind of the sound's forward momentum. The listener is presented with a stream of sonic sweetmeats, like a guest at a Roman banquet whose appetite is repeatedly stimulated but never quite satisfied by the succession of dishes.

Not for Aphrodite the moody ultraminiaturism of Techno, or the relentless clutter of the hyperactive jump-up style now dominating the lions of Rude FM. As his peerless succession of remixes ("Once Again" by A Tribe Called Quest, "I Got 5 On It" by Luniz and, best of all, "Jungle Brother" by Jungle Brothers) has demonstrated, his rooted firmly in Hip-Hop. They might be accelerated and atomized and chrome-plated, but his breaks never lose their easy, funky fluidity. However, anyone with an aversion to raw's infatuation with cheap sentiment will find some of this collection too gaudy: The opening "Interlude" evades double-eyed wrath and one-bass-too-many softwhoredoms, and that emotional loopy reappears from time to time. But it only becomes cloying on "Spice (Even Spice)", which reeks in Kennedy G style sex burles. For the most part, Aphrodite's more interested in urgent desire than E-induced puppy love. "Warrior Like You" — a candidate for best drum 'n' bass tune of all time in my book — is

the album's intense distillation of random lust, with its outrageously inflated basslines and furiously building stairwells. On "B4 Funkster" also, one new single, new slices of the chunky sex sample last heard on Chad Jackson's "Heard The Drummer Get Wicked" slot home gradually into a quivering baseline whose nervy pulsations are pure aural nitrate. The track finally comes correct with a dirty, driving 4x4 into a lightbulb break worthy of Schrody D at his wildest. There's just one of the many uncomplicated, unselfconscious pleasures that this great record has to offer.

CHRIS SHARP

Luciano Berio

Sequenzas

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 457016 3xCD

This elegantly mounted and annotated triple CD set is the first to contain Berio's complete Sequenzas I-XIII. Each sequence is devoted to a thorough exploration of the sonic character of a particular instrument. A common thread through them is the level of technical accomplishment the score demands of the performer. Another is the composer's "own sense" that musical instruments cannot really be changed, nor can they be destroyed, nor indeed invented. However, he is keenly aware of the new possibilities opened up by advances in performing techniques and instrument design. Before Cathy Berberis, for example, few singers would have been capable of tackling Sequenza III.

Of course, as a good Marxist, Berio knows that commercial, not artistic, considerations fuel progress. In the accompanying notes he points out that musicians' demands for a louder, more resonant piano prompted manufacturers to replace the string's wooden frame with a metal one. Berio obliquely capitalizes on that development in Sequenza X, scored for trumpet in C and piano. "resonance!" Like Stockhausen, Berio developed fruitful relationships with his musicians, thereby preempting them throwing their arms up in horror at the impossibility of his scores. Plainly drawing on The Ensemble Intercontemporain for this edition, Berio's sympathetic players rise to his challenges. Though several Sequenzas were written for monophonic instruments, they require performance bordering virtual polyphony. But Berio's idea of polyphony is not so much the move of different lines against each other — he regards most of the pieces as "harmonic discourses" — as the contrast of different modes of execution and timbral

characteristics. Wif for above provides a striking example of his juxtaposition of rapid events with extended playing processes.

Don't let all this talk of instrumental virtuosity lead you into thinking that Sequenzas is full of forbidding, if flamboyant, grandstanding pieces. On the contrary, one of the most memorable is XIII for bassoon. A slow movement for long sustained tones, it sounds simple enough — if you discount bassoonist Pascal Gallice's need to breathe. Some of the effects are remarkable, suggesting the drone of circling planes in a summer sky.

Strictly speaking, Sequenzas is more exploratory than experimental, with Berio's fundamental musicality showing through in his respect for the true nature of each instrument. Indeed, he is dismissive about attempts to artificially 'modify' instruments, be it IRCAM's 'improvements' of the flute or Caga-like preparations of the piano. To be frank, he can be a little too respectful of an instrument's true nature, for Sequenzas isn't entirely free of cliché. XII for guitar has a number of predictable cues—Spanish gestures, and XII for accordion sometimes sounds like the soundtrack for an old dark-house movie. But mostly the set contains exemplary performances of stunning works.

BARRY WITHERDEN

Breathless

Blue Moon

TONIC VOSSA BREATH16 12 CD2

Eight years ago, Breathless released their fourth album, *Between Happiness And Heartache*. Its awed reviews seemed to indicate Breathless into a silence that has only now been broken by *Blue Moon*. Whatever caused their prolonged absence — be it slings or sudden crisis — isn't really part of *Blue Moon*. Recorded mostly live, it is a decisive response to years of indecision, and the scratchy, lo-fi quality of its layered textures — generated by Dominic Appleton, the singer/guitarist formerly of The Mental Coil, and guitarist Gary Mundy — signals Breathless's break from a reclusive indie ghetto to a more open performance area.

On this album the desolate romanticism of Appleton's vocals finds a foil in the group's active Rhythm section. An Neufeld and Marilyn Watts turn up songs like "Goodnight" or "No Remorse Prayers", the latter penned with a reversioned Joy Division tenet. The only tracks are good enough, but the really outstanding material comes on *Phonostone*, the extra CD compiling a limited edition

version of *Blue Room*. Originally some 100 minutes long, it's been edited in half, without sacrificing the spontaneity of the mix, featuring guitars, bass, minimal keyboards and little else to get down that special Scratch Orchestra technique. Breathless swooped around their usual instruments to ensure each was as stranger in the strange land they were attempting to map. Over a background scratch of alien(ized) percussion and rhythmic oscillations, Moorsone's fragmented sounds — floating chords, organs, scratchings, shakings — are the stuff of singular nightmare. Arbitrarily structured, its power residing in the subtle interaction between actual sound and suggestion, it could be an installation piece, or a soundtrack for an Eisenstein remake. Yet its deceptively slight developments are not incidental. Once the sonic collision of its inchoate crescendo is worked through, its payoff comes in the palpable relief of the music's undefinable tension.

LOUISE GRAY

Peter Brötzmann & Frode Gjerstad

Invisible Touch
CADENCE CJK1099 CD

Die Like A Dog Quartet

From Valley To Valley
REMYTE MYD10 CD

Peter Brötzmann

Noise Of Wings
SLACK SACD019 CD

Back in the silver ages, Peter Brötzmann used to be documented rather like a Blue Note artist, mostly strictly within the Euro-improv clan. In his recent pomp, he's become a noble nomad, the force of nature that blows into whichever corner will make room for him. Hard to tell how this expands his own vocabulary, as voluminous as it already is, but the freshness of each context is camp for Brötzmann complexes.

Here he's with three Americans, two Swedes and a Norwegian in duo with Gjerstad, at a club gig in Stavanger; the music is one long fusile inevitability, the shy and retiring Frode plays a gracious step down from Brötzmann's intensity, though he obviously enjoyed the gig. The German tends to blow forward regardless and lets Gjerstad try and scratch up some kind of melodic counterpoint, but in the end they settle on a kind of mutual roaming.

Die Like A Dog have previously appeared on two PSP albums. Here, recorded during a live in The Valley festival session, Roy Campbell replaces Toshiron Kondo on brass, while William Parker and Harrell Drake sign on as before. If Campbell is scarcely a match for Kondo in terms of extremity, he brings a type of bruised lyricism to the proceedings that makes its own future mark on the rough-housing around him. Parker and Drake are long since brooded as Brötzmann corporals by now. Three pieces cover 17, 40 and ten

minutes each, with space for solo coggerling as well as much ripe interplay. This appears to be the context the saxophonist

thrives in most readily now, a small group with fellows he knows well enough but isn't yet bored by.

Having a second horn player takes some of the burden of the great man's shoulders, perhaps. Yet when alone with bass and drums Brötzmann often makes some of his most vivid and implacable music. *Noise Of Wings* finds him with electric bassist Peter Frits Nielsen and drummer Peter Uusikyla. A slight recall of Last Exit without Sheroock, possibly, and one is certainly reminded of how closely Brötzmann and Bill Laswell got on, although Nielsen is a different kind of player. He gets a thick, swimming tone out of the bass, a bit like

Pelika
Pohjola Uusikyla is more of a thrasher and refuses to swing the line much. In this offbeat environment Brötzmann sounds like he is blowing into the teeth of a gale which his compass isn't quite set for, and there's an extra ounce of ferocity as a result. Gentleman that he is, Peter would probably demur from choosing his favourite among these records — but it would be interesting to know

RICHARD COOK



Head case: Gavin Bryars

Gavin Bryars

The North Shore/Intermezzo
ALLEGRA ALB800
PANTALONI SONDRI MAGO 00108 CD

The North Shore is Gavin Bryars's audently beautiful evocation of the Yorkshire coastline at Whitby, which he recorded once before with his own ensemble on *A Man In A Room* (1997). Originally composed as a piano and viola duet, it is recast here for cello! Damiano Pulei and parent Alessandra Garos. Cinnamon player Ono Odori joins Garos on *Intermezzo*. All three are members of The Harmonia Ensemble and they come together for *Intermezzo*, which they commissioned Bryars to write for them. On all three pieces, the Ensemble affectingly realises the posed elegance that characterises Bryars's compositions.



iggy: all grown up

Iggy Pop

Avenue B

John Linnell

An elusive, indestructible rock sleaze, Iggy Pop is the original perpetrator of dumb insolence and random, reflexive violence. The recent ubiquity of Iggy songs on TV ads notwithstanding, the absence of an international crossover hit has forced the (mis)willingly-accepted, cocksure dwarf to spend 30 years throwing himself around the world's festivals and festival stages. The days of carving himself open with knives and broken bottles may be long gone, but you can still rely on Iggy to turn up shirtless, wearing a few polythene pants on stalks, flopping

out his wanger on cue in a theatrical burst of outrage as ignominiously scripted as a Greek tragedy. And it goes without saying that—despite the defensive praise some of his acolytes fostered on the likes of New Values and Zombie Bitchouse—he hasn't produced a decent record since that shimmering, cocaine-qualified year of 1977, when he bunkered with Bowie in Berlin, mixed in new synthetic chemicals and turned out *List For Life* and *The Idiot* for the stunned enjoyment of the punk generation.

So for the last 22 years Iggy has carried on being Iggy—recording sub-FM Metal workouts like *Instinct* and *American Caesar* and milking the tour circuit to pay the rent, while growing more absurd and grotesque in equal measure. Writers regularly report that offstage he is polite, thoughtful and bespectacled, but people pay to see Iggy. Finally however, and not before time, James Osterberg has surfaced, peeking out from behind the mask that guarantees the paycheck. This is the scenario of *Avenue B*.

This is not to say it is a good record. Far from it. But unlike most anything else he has turned out in the last 20 years, it is a fascinating one. And it's so honest, it's more painful, even than the tortured stink of "LA Blues" or the dated misanthropy of "Cock in My Pocket" or the sedated pocus of "Mass Production." Accompanied by sparse acoustic guitar and pattering percussion, for the most part Iggy resurrects the shined, vaguely hammy croon last heard on "Turn Blue" on songs that acknowledge his history, relationships and (moderately lucrative) showbiz persona. The words are so nakedly confessional that at first it is hard to take them seriously—this must be another punk scam, right? Wrong. These songs are the whinnies of a man trying to wriggle out of a straitjacket, while torturing himself trying to remember

how he got to wear it in the first place.

Take the opening "No Shit," intoned over swelling Angelo Badalamenti-style strings: "It was in the winter of my 50th year when I found that I was really alone and there wasn't a hell of a lot of time left. Every laugh and touch that I could get became more important." Or the lounge melancholy of the title track, whose flickering Hammond organ recalls Tony Joe White's original version of "Rainy Night in Georgia." "Yo, I'm sitting in my castle on the verge of a divorce and I haven't got a fiddle. I'll create my own of course." Though he castigates himself mercilessly for his weaknesses and failures, the tone throughout verges on the adolescent. Well, having spent three decades in a state of arrested development, he's got a lot of pique to work through his system. Hence the cover of "Shaking All Over," which is all string noise and wah-wah suspended over a hushed atmosphere. It's tempting to hear its howling refrain, "shaking all over" as a lament for the onset of Parkinson's disease rather than an expression of barely suppressed teenage lust. Actually, it could be both, because he sings it like it was WB Yeats's late poem "The Spur," where "lust and rage... dance attendance on my old age." The string-sodden "She Called Me Daddy" comes across like a Narcotics Anonymous confessional full of contempt and self-loathing, with Iggy sobbing audibly off mic. The following "Fat The Luxury" is more extreme still, a nasty little narrative of weakness and misogynic violence, delivered deadpan over a jazz backdrop.

As a bleak spectacle, *Avenue B* is as near as Iggy is likely to get to Lou Reed's caustic Berlin. But for all its somber introspection, it is not a "mature" album. It is Iggy's painfully delayed rites of passage.

CHRIS SHARP

In effect, Bryars follows Morton Feldman in valuing elegance and beauty within music, that has evolved from radical experimentation. But whereas Feldman's late pieces were determinedly abstract, Bryars has mastered an intertextual metalanguage which allows him to imply narratives of loss and yearning through comparably pillaged musical structures. So, in his notes to the earlier recording of *The North Shore*, Bryars referred not only to the North Yorkshire coast he visited as a child, but also to "the obsession of Jules Verne's Captain Hatteras who, in his final madness, would walk only towards the north." If the titles of *Allegro* and *Intermezzo* seem as self-referential as Feldman's *Trio* or Piano, the music is as suggestive of incident and emotion as *The North Shore*. The cryptic performance instruction contained in the title of *Allegro* actually alludes to Edmondo Allegri, d'Arzest and dedicatee of Ferruccio Busoni's *Bagel*, the acknowledged model for Bryars' piece. In less disciplined hands, such lyrical materials might descend into sentimentality, but Bryars preserves the

detachment of a conceptualist. Viewed as musical processes, as storytelling, or as essays. In feeling, his compositions have the provocation of permutations, instances rather than absolutes. Superfuous irony in performance would reduce the music to the status of theatrical effect. Heightened melancholy would be doubly strange, enacting the scores to do their finely nuanced work.

JULIAN COFFRY

Matt De Gennaro & Alastair Galbraith

Wise Music
Corpus Hermiteum Hermiteum CD

American artist Matt De Gennaro traces the components of Plautus back to Athenianus Kircher (1602-80) and John Tyndal (1820-93), who researched into the sonic properties of long-tensed wires—what Pythagoreans call the "cosmic monochord." In 1998 Gennaro visited New Zealand and hooked up

with Alastair Galbraith, who has played with The David C. and A. Handful Of Dust, to test Tyndal and Kircher's findings in performance. Packaged in Corpus Hermiteum's characteristic style—raw cardboard unfolds to reveal a brown paper sleeve printed with a medieval woodcut—this CD was recorded live at Everything Inc. in an 18th-century basement by torchlight; the audience was plunged into total darkness for the 18-minute performance of Gennaro and Galbraith rubbing their raised hands over piano wires stretched across the space. The addition of three soundcheck rehearsals brings the disc's running time up to 40 minutes. The last piece also features Galbraith playing scrap violin and an appropriately sore-sounding tape loop.

This isn't an example of the homophonically congruent "gorgeousness" used in many sonic installations. The ear cannot beat, but must follow the touch-sensitive drama of the playing. What at first seems threadbare and abstruse becomes fascinating. Although the idea was to place the listener inside an

instrument—the basement has been turned into a giant sounding box—the players' scribbled immediacy recalls the far-out string techniques you might encounter with Malcolm Goldstein's violin or William Parker's bass. Though they'd probably be disgusted to hear it, these intuitive occultists have breached the grey realm of creative improvisation.

BEN WATSON

Die Trip Computer Die

Shadism Diebits
ALCOHOL ALCOHOL CD

The Homosexuals' glory has only deepened since they dissolved almost 20 years ago, partly because none of their startling, insanely great art punk records have been reissued. The excellent *Shadism Die* rounds several Homosexuals and their associates—all under different names, naturally—and as *Die Trip Computer Die* they do for sampler technology what their old group did for punk instrumentation: they use

to simulate pop forms in the same way that pop people simulate humans in *version Of The Body Snatchers*. All of these songs seem reasonably normal from a distance, but up close they're very weird. Most of them appear to be built out of mutated samples stacked Logo-style. Not a single one of them is recognizable, even when they're plastered up front in the mix, like the song's little hook of "I'm Baaaa". The lyrics betray an obsession with violent death and even more violent absurdity for the pop song's grand subject of love. There's something radically 'off' about every track. Xantos Benetos's strangled garage rapping on about "The Duk of Death", saccharine strings butting up against gruesomely aetheric found sounds, Leskie Buchwalter's crooning an uncertain encomium to "Cupid's bloody music." Late in the album, a couple of blurred, easy sample collages appear without even the semblance of form, but in their context, and separated by the densely orchestrated avant-blk yowl "I Get Control", they sound perfectly normal. OTC'd are careful never to make it clear which side they're on.

SONGLAS WOLFE

Dorgon & Laura Cromwell

Rats Live On No Evil Star Mar
JUPRO RECORDINGS NO NUMBER CD

As hermetic as a palindrome, this recording codifies Gordon Kraiser, the leering Dorgon, with Laura Cromwell, his former ally in the group Dim Sum Cio Joon. Cromwell's drumming is ostensibly artless, shrewdly antipathetic. Simply dodging into safety through her sensitive aliveness to possibilities of timbral variation. Dorgon also plays the seemingly naive card, using saxophones and clarinet to wield melodic fragments into swirls and zaggas which vibrate and glow like sparse forms in a Paul Klee sketch. The duo's achronic style has a loquacious, pitiless light years away from the scorching virtuosity with which John Coltrane and Rashied Ali defined the terms for this instrumental match. A characteristic sleeveplate joke announces the track "For Tiny Winky" was recorded on the Challenger space shuttle. That and the crude star adorning the cover are as close to interstellar space as Dorgon and Cromwell get, but their low-grade luminosity signals a tenable alternative to the cul de sac of self-mitation. The Dorgon response to Cromwell's unassuming percussive taciturnity is very different to that insinuated for by her enthusiastically received encounter with gargantuan bassist William Parker. Indeed, it is striking that Dorgon has managed to secure a following through his idiosyncratic orientation, rather than a notably distinctive instrumental voice. This keeps the door open for surprises such as the string quartet and solo cello pieces in the 1998 Dorgon album *W*. It may prove difficult to sustain in time, but for the moment that orientation keeps him

where he clearly wants to be: at a healthy remove from the formless.

JULIAN COWLEY

Marc Ducret

L'Ombra Di Vardi
SCREWJAM SCRAW/0010 CD

Guitarist Marc Ducret's trio album arrives in Screwjam's trademark mania cardboard, the title spelt out over art brut scribbles etched in elegant silver. Eric L'Orange's drums are recorded in echid digital, scraping portentously like someone who's heard Tony Oxley. Ducret replicates various twists and turns pioneered by Bill Fissell (rockist riff bluster followed by lyrical arcs) and Derek Bailey (high notes that sail out like alien saucers). Though Bruno Chevillon is not a stand-in for L'Orange, his '70s style he plays a postiche Haden drone, but it's no "Song For One".

The trio's anarchic 'grab some of that attitude is especially enticing. Even if you can't name the sources, you can sense the death of impetus. When musicians discover new ways of relating — whether it's the gods of bebop and improv, or BOS punks The Monk, or Kow deviates The Dead C — the music peaks an emotional punch. Here, the jazz expert could indict the trio's shoddy rhythmic coordination and the soloists' inability to maintain a coherent argument, but it's doubtful such quibbling would help. These musicians want to sound good rather than play, which never makes for a satisfying listen. The initial impression of groovy pretentious soon evaporates, and a depressing sense of self-regarding festivity sets in.

The suspicion that Screwjam has a house policy of reducing expression of the means of expression to laudatory commodities is confirmed by the inclusion of a recipe for poulet breton breton. On *Howl Bay*, Don Cherry turned a favourite recipe into a delightful rap, but printing haiku cuisine on the back of a portrait photo that emulates the inquisitorial self-haired of theatre of cruelty extremities is all wrong. Essentialist Pans as a gourmet option. For people who think all art is expensively packaged tag, L'Ombra Di Vardi is perfect ammunition.

BEN WATSON

Luc Ferrari

Interupteur/Autologos 3
BLUE CHORISTS KCI CD

In 1970 EMI France issued these two Luc Ferrari compositions played by a Rensson ensemble under the direction of Konstantin Semenovitch. Now former Gerd De Sol member David Grubbs releases them on his own label with enthusiastic sleeveplates, plus Ferrari's own retrospective comments. Post-rock keeps alive music which the classical tradition only tolerated at best.

Luc Ferrari was a pupil of Olivier Messiaen

He wrote serialist compositions, then in the late 50s started working with musical concrete pioneer Pierre Schaeffer directly on tape. However, he also wrote straight compositions. *Interupteur* (1967) means 'electric switch'. Two electric organs marinate an oscillating drone. This horizontal sublimity is stretched by dazzling events that resemble the bizarrely intricate tangles of timbre napping through pieces by Messiaen and Boulez. Each time one of these sonic knots passes under the line, the held chords shift up a notch, increasing the tension. A muted trumpet and a scratchy violin buzz like flies on a hot day. By breaking with serialist dogma and introducing a background jazz, Ferrari focuses the ear on his sonic eruptions, rather like a Surrealist introducing a vanishing point in order to concentrate the vision on some weird blob of paint. The ever rising harmonic backdrop recalls Tanglewood Dream, but Ferrari's grasp of instrumentation keeps the soundbaths colourful and jagged.

Autologos 3 (1970), for 11 instruments and magnetic tape, is a med, lightbulb-encrusted, fern wheel vulgarisation of Webern's rations of instrumental colour, plus interludes of compulsive repetition on organ derived from Terry Riley. Circus music jokes start up, but are absorbed into the argument. It's not exactly minimalism: the way the piece advances its locked-in form is sarcastic and critical rather than mythic and transcendental.

Ferrari's work hasn't the bonetone intransigence of music that keep you returning for another chew, but it is entirely entertaining in ways to do with deployment of sound — the minimum requirement for your attention.

BEN WATSON

David Grubbs & Mats Gustafsson

Apertura
BLUE CHORISTS KCI CD

David Grubbs's music hasn't freed my imagination so far, but here he is in the company of one of Europe's finest improv saxophonists — will it be the life this time? Other than his solo discs, Mats Gustafsson's most satisfying recordings were made with his Swedish mates Sten Sundell and Raymond Sjönd in Gush, and British bass player Barry Guy. In those contexts he exhibited a remarkably imaginative approach to timbre and texture, often delivering his ideas at great speed, yet with great freedom and sensitivity. *Apertura*, however, is a different matter altogether. This is minimalist improv where less is basically bigger. All the album features two long pieces in which the drone is king, and both players focus on or around a single tone with only marginal swells in dynamics and shifts in texture. It has a vaguely Oriental ambience, with Grubbs's pliant alto saxophone and tenor suggesting a subdued stripped down kind of gagaku. But it's hard to believe that

Gustafsson could be drawn into such a tepid, unimpassioned project. To hear what you can do with just one note, check out Giacomo Scab's stunning *Quattro Pieces* for Orchestra from the late 1950s, where less is decidedly more.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

High Rise

Speed Five Soccer
PARADELLI PLUT 111 CD

High Rise

Duraport
FRACIAL 005 CD

Musica Transonic

Swing Strong Mod
PSF PSF0108 CD

Toho Sara

Men Jon Tan Shio
PSF PSF0109 CD

High Rise is the largest kind of bass guitarist and singer Ashtori Nampo's legions of groups. On these two High Rise albums his vocals as ever cede the spotlight to guitar extremist Munehiro Nanka. This may be lary, noisy, rambofurious, hardcore trash territory, but Nanka's playing can be extremely elegant, hear how he phrases his licks on *Duraport's* "Deafness", for instance. Of course it's impossible to avoid mentioning the Hendrix presence of many pieces, though some have an unmistakable Cream-y flavour — catch that opening riff on "Door" — and *Photograph's* Fast Eddie Clarke also deserves a namecheck. *Duraport* was recorded live at Le Garage in Paris in November 1998. Speed Five Sonic dates back to 1994, when Uke Euro was the drummer instead of Shio Hano.

Nampo sings English lyrics that might possibly be spelling over with moriant we, urbane wordplays and incense observations on the human condition. That they're impossible to make out is OK by me, as it renders his scene beaming as another musical texture to be folded in with the pounding bass, howling, screaming and swooping guitar, and stamping, slithering drums, crested with the white noise hiss of the cymbals. At times High Rise recall *Psycho Valentine*, not least because many of the tunes would work equally as well in more delicate arrangements. Indeed some well-crafted songs are buried beneath the neuron shredding, high frequency volume and distortion.

On *Musica Transonic's* *Swing Strong Mod*, Nampo is joined by Acid Mothers Temple guitarist/guitarist Masato Kawasaki and Rains' drummer Katsuya Yoshida. Strong on blues-hued playing, with numerous weird and satisfying textures on the side, Musica's prime role would appear to be James Blood Ulmer.

The notes to *Toho Sara's* *Men Jon Tan Shio* state that it's a six part sequence "conceived" by Nampo, who plays several Eastern and Western instruments and electronics in the company of

soundcheck

Kavabata, on viola, violin and on array of Japanese traditional instruments, and original Hiroshi Mito. The notes go on to describe the "Japanese Underground Shamisen" as "gentle, mystic sound of Tokyo Samba." By that I guess they mean they lean more toward gagaku and Noh theatre music than *Ahebi Of Fire* or "Hey Judo." In many ways the least accessible of these four albums, it is also the most fascinating, beautiful and rewarding.

BARRY WITHERS

Incapacitants

DECEMBER 1991/10 CD

Incapacitants

Unauthorized Patrol Operation
1991/13 CD

Compared to the saturation bombing release strategies of "name" Japanese noise acts like Herbivore and Acid, the Incapacitants duo of T. Mikawa and Fumio Kosaka have conducted a more selective, though ironically no less extreme campaign. Their group was founded in the early 80s as the solo unit of Japan's leading noise fanzine artist T. Mikawa, who is also the founding member of Japan's longest running noise group Hysteresis (born 1979).

"Mikawa set up Incapacitants as an outlet for what he calls "pure noise." Their core releases on Osaka's Alchemy label (owned by Hysteresis' leader Jojo Hoshigoe) document their dazed search for the hallucinatory nirvana of consciousness destruction. On *Debut Standard*, their search for the bliss, the ideal density of their work is far removed both from Herbivore's reliance on implied rhythm and the art concepts that shape up being's output. Sounding like a fun being kicked around in a sea, the closing track, "Half Acoustic Night Of BO", harks back to the giddy days of early Hysteresis. Pile-driving the group continues to avoid the bondage/death imagery that seems to excite their peers. Instead they pluck titles like "Securitization Of Bel" and "Company Never Obtains The Loan But It Defaults" from the world of high finance. The confused sound note that Mikawa holds down a day job with one of Japan's leading banks.

The second volume in OR's made-to-order CD-R series is a short live recording from Tokyo's UFO Club documenting a more physical side to Incapacitants. Over the years they have evolved a style of performance that approximates a bout of pro-wrestling (another inescapable Japanese underground obsession). Where other artists awkwardly stand to attention by their machines, this dynamic duo kneedrop and deadpunch both their equipment and each other. Their performance really demands to be seen, but the brevity of the disc makes up for any loss of visuals.

ALAN COPPING

Lydia Kavina Music From The Ether: Original Works For Theremin NOV 10 CD

It-moves-alongside will recall Lydia Kavina's theremin playing on Howard Shore's soundtrack for *Ed Wood*. On this disc she enlists the removal services of three different pianists, an oboist and The Portland String Quartet to help her recreate the theremin in a more "respectable" classical neighbourhood. But to what point? With Kavina's scily vibrato recalling the schizoid of Jascha Heifetz's early violin recordings, the theremin might just as well be a fiddle for all it brings to the party yet slight works of Joseph Schillinger, Isidor Adorno and Friedrich Willems. Dating from the late 20s through to the 40s, their compositions have not aged well. Ditto Bohuslav Martinu's *Fantasie for Theremin* and (oboe-extended) *sonata quintet*. But a few moments justify the listener's curiosity. Jorge Arancibia's *Myosotis* (1995) features a later piece called *Of Whispers* HQ. Vladimir Komarov's *Voce di Gherardini* (1996) contains an eerie waltz piece. And Percy Grainger's astonishing *Free Music #1* (1936) for four theremins still sounds like music from another planet. Sadly, it only lasts 52 seconds.

Kavina also includes a few of her own somewhat studied compositions, but at least they show the instrument off to great effect. At the end of the album you can hear her asking the studio engineers, "Sounds like [it's] night, can we listen to it?" Good question. Taken at a single sitting, 68 minutes in close proximity to the theremin's wistful vibrato can easily induce seasickness. Its pitch range is certainly impressive, but its limited timbre soon becomes unending. Unlike the ondes marmont, which was immortalized in such major works as Messiaen's *Turangalla* Symphony, the theremin has gone down in history as a sound effect curiosity.

DANIEL WARBURTON

Lee Konitz/Steve Swallow/Paul Motian

Three Guys
JULY 1995/12 CD

Three Guys maybe, but not Three Regular Guys. Drummer Paul Motian looks more than ever like the French philosopher Michel Foucault. But extra-musical references aside, the trio is a dream team for improvisational freedom and interaction. Normal leader Lee Konitz emerged in the late 40s as an acolyte of Lennie Tristano with an alto style of lean lines and suppressed vibrato which provided about the only alternative to Charlie Parker. Now aged 71, his lines have taken on a stark intensity as he continues to push at the boundaries of expression in jazz. That he does so through standard material only appears to be a paradox.

The album features compositions by all three participants, but Konitz is the only one not based on standard song chord progressions. Bassist Steve Swallow's "Ladies"

Waters" uses the chords of "Out Of Nowhere". Konitz's "Things" follows the template of "All The Things You Are." Joann's "Ladies" gets a beautifully affecting treatment.

Paul Motian plays a surprising amount of time, but still with great freedom. Swallow's electric bass is precise and delicate. Konitz himself is a musician who knows his worth, but his standards are exacting, and he's relentless in his pursuit of honest expression. To him this means only playing what he hears. The often heard accusation that his playing is "cerebral" is absurd. Konitz who finds and feels deeply, and anyone who thinks such an approach problematic is probably capable of neither.

ANDY NATHAN

Lilys Zero Population Growth OCTOBER 1995 CD

They might be American, but Lilys gladly pass up their looks on Radio 66 in favour of exploring areas mapped out by German groups like Krauter. To Rocco Rot and even House On Mars, their music glides on an electronic neo-Techno pulse. It is sleek, clean and full of subtle detail, monotonous maybe, but also sensual. Opening with "The Escape", they ride the freeway while dreaming about the autobahn, maintaining cruise speed with a warm number of bass, crisp drumming and analogue burbles. The Krauter-like "The Law" rides a bass originating in a distant place, in a haze of rhythm ticks and pinpoint electronic blips out through by a lovely analogue synth tune. On "Back Again" the programmed percussion brings to mind *Metropolis* early 70s drum machines. Lilys don't sound like the great lost New! record or some other newly rediscovered Krautrock misleaver. But in pulling just wide of the Nazi target, they make a good stab at very early Stereolab. They are too good to stay there for long. This album has enough individual touches to make it well worth investigating.

PIKE BARNES

Raphe Malik ConSequences DECEMBER 1993 CD

Sunny Murray & Sabir Mateen

Sunny Murray & Sabir Mateen
DECEMBER 1993 CD

Ye Ren Another Shining Path

DECEMBER 1993/10 CD

It's not easy to explain how drummer Sunny Murray's playing works. Put it down, play it out and out it up, you'll be scarcely any wiser. Some passages could have fallen straight off the page of any basic drum tutor, yet they're

put to use no teacher would countenance or even recognise. But there's also no moments of baffling sophistication. Even Jones plays different rhythms, even different tempi, with each limb. Run alongside each other the components cancel down like some algebraic process into direct prosaic power. Murray comes in from the outside, setting off from lids so simple you doubt they can ever contrive anything constructive to the music. Yet their accretion, not to mention the unbridled intensity with which Murray rolls them out, nudges, encourages and harness his co-players. His tireless pulse is as natural as the beat of your heart or the howl of a hurricane, and as inexorable.

There are only two feasible responses for hom players: they can bare the passionate core of their impressing souls or steadfastly refuse to take the bait, defending a secret and unobtainable calm at the centre of the whirlwind. On Sunny Murray & Sabir Mateen, Mateen takes his latter approach once or twice, but most of the time he matches Murray for ferocity, whether on flute or alto or tenor saxes. In the contemplative "Resping New Dreams", Murray's keening vocalising stretches lines for a ghost bass or cello. This number also features some of Murray's most approachable playing, with dancing figures and crisp rhythmic patterns that here and there suggest Max Roach's melodic style.

Dennis Charles was Murray's predecessor with Cecil Taylor's group, and you can compare and contrast his technique on trumpet. Raphe Malik's *ConSequences*, one of Charles' last recordings before his death. Like Murray, Charles played at this, spreading out backdrops for the solos as often as he would prod them forward, but he was far less implacable than Murray, and his lighter approach was more a far wind in the sails rather than a dangerous swell under the hull. On *ConSequences* the splendid bassist William Parker assumes the propulsive role as often as Charles — check out his remarkable polyphonic percussive rhythm "I lead solo on 'The Gift', or his majestic, richly booming accompaniment on "Ghost Dance". Mateen is on hand again, this time using alto only playing a number of sharp, pungent, shrilling solos and engaging Malik's trumpet in quick-witted exchanges. Malik's own soloing is stinging, terrible and fiery. As well as assembling and holding together this excellent quartet, he also contributed all the compositions.

Parker is also at the centre of *Another Shining Path*, the highly concentrated debut by the group Ye Ren, in which he is flanked by Gary Haysay on alto and Toshi Makihara on percussion. You can't go too far wrong with Parker underpinning proceedings, but there's much else to admire here. Haysay is a thoughtful improviser, connecting in lyric and abstract modes, with a fine sense of shape, texture and development, and a clear, firm, incisive tone in all registers. Makihara is an attentive, responsive and meticulous percussionist, a couple more steps down the

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William Parker

Alan Silva & William Parker A Hero's Welcome: Paces For Rare Occasions

PHOTO: JEFFREY CO

Alan Silva played bass for Sun Ra, Bill Dixon, Cecil Taylor and Albert Ayler, a rollicking heavy with jazz kudos, but he ripped up his CV by moving to France and taking up the MOI sampler. He declares his concept is orchestral, and uses bowed string, porcelain string, wood, horn and percussion samples — along with strangely physical chords played on a straight piano. William Parker's astonishingly wide vocabulary of bass sounds is famous; his stream of arco grinds, rainbow harmonics and deep pluckings are also

concerned on an orchestral scale.

Together, Silva and Parker play a music that is stunningly decisive and seamless, gorgeous and dramatic. It grooves like a motherfucker, but it's also high-flow, sardonic and abstract. The multilayered textures immediately reference the classical tradition, suggesting two post-tonal orchestras improvising in real time. The musicians grip each other's lines as intimately and passionately as lovers, but the eloquence remains symphonic.

The tradition Silva works in — he lists Ellington, Pärt, Ravi Shankar — is of composers who led their own orchestras, even made their own instruments, rather than wrote scores for interpretation by the impersonal machinery of the classical establishment. Using a sampler makes Silva's approach still more personal and epicentric, but he avoids the tonal pomp and bluster that made Rick Wakeman and Vangelis laughable. He understands that the community implied by baroque strings can no longer be crossed, emphasising instead the alienation and anxiety of post-Romantic string writing. However, the improvised velocity is ferocious and winning, implying a muscular positivism far from the blocked notes of avant-garde pageantry.

Silva makes no claims to being a keyboardist, saying he's just a composer using apophonic technology. However, the hands on immediacy of his playing is telling. It manages to be both frail and instantaneous, with stuttering cutoffs, sudden assonances, quick dies — yet it's also polished and soaring. Given the breadth of timbral resort and rhythmic detail, the mutual understanding between Parker and Silva is exhilarating. The intransigent modernism of Cecil Taylor and free improvisation is

revealed as a genuine musical method rather than attention-seeking obsession.

There is a supplementary anxiety. The fact that Silva's orchestration is a virtual begs questions. The idea of banks of orchestral players repeating the specific touch signature of Silva's attack is alarmingly dictatorial: great symphonic music arises from unleashing the conscious intent of musicians, not tying them to the knee of one player's gestures. His improvising big band, The Celestial Communications Orchestra, was not an ensemble of dot reading drones. So, rather than a blueprint or substitute for an orchestral work, this duo recording should be seen as the main event, a celebration of modern technology's powers of mimicry. Silva is not playing his game in order to demo his technological mastery, but to unleash mass strings and pluckings and oboes for Parker to respond to. The free improvising brief provides risk and discipline.

The best parts of *A Hero's Welcome* are the heeled, rhythmically charged exchanges. Silva and Parker scrub at each other like two symphonic John Lee Hookers. Indeed, some of the best moments in blues and rock have been just such ludicrous, scavenge-art kitchen sink versions of big band swing, mimicry of lightly organised ensembles using improvised equipment, taking offical, socialised music back into the individual's physical gesture. (DJ scratching and beatbox vocalise are the most recent manifestations of that process.) Silva has applied that dialectic to the orchestra. He MOI sampler is less the cutting edge of new technology than the broom and washboard in every home. If only swinging the classics — or 'jazz' as some call it — always sounded this succulent.

BEN WATSON

post-Murray road. His debt contractions fill out the sound picture of these carefully constructed improvisations in improv terms. Another *Sinning Path* is just that. Along with the other two albums, it demonstrates the continuing variety and vitality of jazz-based improvised music.

BARRY WITHERS

Joe Morris Mystery Range

OFFSHOOT FACTORY #P243 CD

Joe Morris has been doing much fine work, from the blues-rock improv of his early live records onwards, and the stopover on Kiting Factory is a logical continuation. Rob Brown's alto is a familiar sparring partner and Andrea Parkins does her sampler plus accordion thing, but the fourth member of the quartet provides the distinction: bassoonist Karen Borca, who has been rather neglected since her collaborations with Jimmy Lyons.

If she's the surprise player, there's nothing very surprising about the music, at least in

terms of its dynamics or direction. Their thing is to all play like each other: muted, roll and tumble lines that go forward, chasing in and around each other. Eschewing all effects, Morris just picks, Brown pulls lean and pitifully propulsive figures, Parkins constructs a spidery where and Borca grumbles out one scratchy counterpart after another. When all four of them are really putting it, as on "Small Cycle", the music is so dense and thrilly plotted that 11 minutes of it are as exhausting to focus on as the most grueling chunk of Cecil Taylor. But the chamber-like elusiveness of it all never gets much sandered either.

Michael Rosenzweig's interesting eleven-note flick in a lot of the conceptual rhetoric, though I'm not sure where the bowed lute music of West Africa fits in. He is dead on about shared vocabularies and sensibilities, though. If Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh had taken their playing a few steps further on, it would surely have sounded a lot like this. Genuine improvisation on a single day in the studio, but harmonised to a preannounced desire.

RICHARD COOK

Moose On Mars Nuan Niggung

COMBO WIC-101P

When Moose On Mars landed it was as if strange Halditch cuckoo had taken over the console, making child's play music with an unnerveingly knowing edge. They handled the cold hard tech of electronics like stones they'd found in the street. Alternatively, they were like post-Alan Syd Barretts — precocious and precocious — playing the seductive child in a world full of alien adults. The cartoon mouse made a planet disoriented by ever more 'communication'. In the middle of any given musical 'thought' they might stop and drift off, free associate, go deep into their own enigmatic tale.

Cut to the chase. To this moseketter, Nuan Niggung is a massive lockdown. Expecting my latent fix of dog, nicotine and sublimity, instead I got a lot of jagged, farts and burps. (Even his tales seem endgame cute.) Nuan Niggung sounds — as we used to say — like an album of 8 sides, it's the first MOI music where you get a handle on it immediately, losing no secret codes to explore. Tellingly, things are

more 'light' and song-like than ever before. Where once you couldn't tell where MOI music came from or where it might go, this album feels all too human. It's as if they have nabbed all the sleazy dust from their ears and made an 'easy access' MOI album for BPH-remembered kids. Like some indie improvisation of the quirk strangeness and charm of MOI, it is just slightly too upbeat and 4/4 and smart, also — a terrible boardroom 'rationalisation' of the old, unpredictable MOI ethos.

On "Hippie" and "The White Hermit" we get a teddy sprung solo of trademark MOIphras — the former, computer game vagrant at 7/8 time, the latter, campy-compass dub — but cloying and cartoonish, like some coked-up producer's idea of what the real intention/imitation of electronics might be. Other, less frazzled pieces sound as cutting edge as an old Gracie Goodall going on the ether right now (by big and small names) that MOI sound — for the first time ever — one step ahead.

The dominant tone here — a clipped 'Y' brittle, high 'Y' fuzzy ersatz-junk — is very 80-

83 So I plucked out Thomas Leer's 4 A Sides EP from 1981 for comparison, and you know what? It sounded just like the new MOH, only ten times better. Only twice — on "Albion Rose" (a tollingly ugly title) and "Download Sound" — do MOH suggest they've got something left in the tank. On the latter, a pastoral creaks guitar tries to push up through the noise to the skybox, like the lost ghost of Nick Drake disturbed by a Concrete overheard. But it stops just as it starts to work its magic, a slender sample wailing proper transmutation. This 'pastoral' connection could have been interesting, because much current electronica has more in common with that heritage than it does with, say, the autobahn hard drive of Kraftwerk. The 'old' MOH might have let such speculations bloom and BREATHE, but at 220¢ the track's brevity just cracks a small joke on our big expectations.

Mouse On Mars are in danger of becoming something like the Tom Waits of electronica what was once hot, beautiful sound they became a loop of practiced signatures they could program in their sleep in dead end Scribble play of oldies. Left just hope Nun Nung is a holding manoeuvre

IAN PERMAN

μ-Zig Royal Astronomy HUT CHURCHES CD

Inspired by The White Deer, a James Thurber story about a dying Royal Astronomer, Mike Paradinas's *μ-Zig* LP is a patchwork of pseudo-classical themes, drum 'n' bass rhythms and the odd pop flourish. But with so much stylistic legering going on, it is an easier LP to admire than love. Bouncing ice cream van melodies off fractal rhythms is certainly impressive, but the results never sound quite so cleverly as Paradinas's kindred son, Alisha Twin.

Even so, it is a bold work, scattered with exotic sounds: the chimres and kettles drums of "Scaling" start things off in a suitably grandiose style. On "The Hixed Song", Paradinas rules some strings up against HiHop scratching. On the appealingly dispirited "Autumn Ache" he layers uneasy vocal harmonies offset with jagged breaks over a thick 303 line. He plays the 303 cad again on "The Motorbike Track", whose clipped, double-speed beats cause its sampled banishment menace-mood to buckle and burst. Elsewhere, he sings mad at sickly schizoid melodies, spraying them with better focused a tangle of effects.

MIKE SMALLWOOD

New Flesh For Old Equilibrium DISC: SAGA 1035 3 CDZ/2LP

UK Hip-hop is in a healthier state than ever, with artists like Mark B, Robb Mena, and labels such as K-Boro and Ronin finally

presenting a credible alternative to the traditional US domination. Formed at the beginning of the decade, York-based collective New Flesh For Old stand as one of the UK's veteran crews. Their debut album once again takes musical licence Part 2 with Juice Assem from The Eight Outlaw Immortals. It also features the vocals of Tootsie Tator, one-time MC for both Vadim and Ice.

Equilibrium is one of the most claustrophobic HiHop records you'll hear. Machines buckle under the weight of abuse, regaining their anguish in an unending stream of wren screams, as Mark B 2 warps his sound sources beyond recognition. Above these hyperreal collages, the MCs regale similarly demented tales of transformation ("Musos", "3 Minutes Less") that play on the contrasting approaches of Tator's trick and Assem's post, while always retaining the dancehall edge that characterises British Hip-hop.

Rare moments of light, such as "A Word In Sateen's Ear" featuring Robb Mena, are especially welcome for finally letting us draw breath. In all, the speech is one of UK Hip-hop's most seriously and lyrically adventurous about yet.

PETER PHILLIPS

Non Pagan Musick GREY AREA OF PLEAS PAVANS 7" LP

In 1978, when Pagan Musick was first released, Non was nobody, and nobody really heard the record. Its notoriety came only afterwards, and grew more by word of mouth than actual experience. This release serves mainly to add to the cult long player's mystique, but is nonetheless very much appreciated.

After all, it's a historic artifact now, and the reasons for its fetish object status have long been understood. Non's Boyd Rice suggests that Pagan Musick was inspired by a comment of John Cage, that Cage "didn't want to make records because the format was too hard". Rice, who had already released the "Knew Laddie" single, complete with extra axes holes drilled off centre and three rock grooves, took up the challenge and created a contradictory con-trick. Pagan Musick is a single-sided 7" disc packaged in an LP sleeve, with a total of just over 30 seconds of sound (if it's played at 33rpm). 17 lock grooves (predominantly of course) nose down the recording to a minimum of content, in the process providing for more music and for less time than any Cage record ever did.

Pagan Musick was a tremendous prank. Rice has been recognised elsewhere for a long history of (often callous) hoaxes, and the record is his general approach perfectly. It confounded expectations: what you got was not what you might have expected from its LP description. It was a scarecrow for connoisseurs, a tool for torture, a joke at the expense of music. Why, one side was even blank, where was the value in that?

Pagan Musick was a pinnacle of minimalism

endeavour. Minimalist composers had long ago turned to high volume assault as a way of opening ears to the subtle aural effects hidden within their monochromatic harmonies. The likes of Steve Reich and Alvin Lucier turned to the tape loop as a means to explore the fact that repetition (because Ben Enos's drum) is just a form of change. Rice's description of his own early noise music, "You can best define 'noise' melodies coming out — the most subtle elements can become very pronounced" echoes the experience of critics like Tom Johnson confronted with radical minimalism.

Pagan Musick was a hammer to break open the prison of the recording. Its duration and sequence were entirely up to the listener, skipping the styles between grooves as the mood took them. Its sound was open to wide modification. Not only could you choose your own playback speed, but if left to loop for long enough, the vinyl would degrade, introducing new pops and crackles into the experience.

Pagan Musick was the more brutal, more radical underground counterpart to Lou Reed's *Noted Machines Music*, noise to annoy, music which demanded submission to its cacophonous ache, music as a test of the listener's machismo or machismo. It's one of the finest noise records, refusing to shield its monolithic intensity with melody or structure, and horribly recorded in its sound.

Of course, Pagan Musick is just part of the great sound archive now, long surpassed in scope for interactivity by Christian Marclay's make-your-own-record kit (a ready-to-mould vinyl beat just plus a nail) or the RRRecords label's RRR-100 single, a compilation of 100 lock grooves. Music that is never or more minimal is easy enough to find now. But if much of its radical aura exists only in the past, this remains a potent package, thanks to the actual sounds engraved within its fingerings which. Several of the grooves have a particularly curious, thrilling tremor, which really do really lengthily listening.

If silence is golden, the noise of Pagan Musick is the blackness of coal, a diamond in the making.

IRIAN DROUD

Paul Panhuyser Partitua For Long Strings X1 RECORDS 122 CD

In 1986 Paul Panhuyser's Apollo Records issued a new list containing three albums and an illustrated book, superbly documenting the long string installations he had realised with Johan Goudaart between 1982 and 1985. Photographs registered their sculptural and architectural aspects, environmental designs which gave concrete form to Panhuyser's pursuit of the connections between visual and aural perception. In his introductory note, Arnold Dreyblatt recorded the physical sensation, induced by the installations, of "standing when the resonating box of a giant stringed instrument". The publication offered a

brilliant account, but inevitably lacked vital dimensions of that instant experience. *Partitua For Long Strings* constitutes a further stage of Panhuyser's work. Where earlier recordings basically documented his installations, this was specifically conceived as a CD. It is a more thoroughly composed piece, performed solo with multi-track.

The music was recorded in 1997 at Het Apollohuis, the former cigar factory in Brundish where Panhuyser ran for 17 years as an exemplary forum for innovative exhibitors, installations and performances by an international community of artists, until paucity of funding forced its closure. For "Partitua II", four long strings tuned to the same pitch were sounded by Panhuyser brushing them, as evenly as possible, as he walked beside them. Three further recordings were then superimposed, resulting in a density of 16 strings. Overlaid tuning, modified further between the overlaid recordings, augment the textural complexity of "Partitua II And II".

Panhuyser signalled affiliation to Fluxus in 1968, when he formed a drone ensemble that adopted the surname of the movement's prime mover, George Maciunas. That group persists, its musical practices driven by psychoanalytic expansion. More generally, Panhuyser operates as rational iconoclast, or Gauda structuralist. Where the CD *Lost For Words*, recently released by Table Of Elements, provided ample evidence of his continuing Fluxus alignment, *Partitua For Long Strings* is superficially a very different affair, but it too couples conceptual meticulousness with wowed immersion in the raw physicality of sound.

JULIAN COWLEY

Kimmo Pohjonen Kaisla BISCARDOL 200000 CD

A visceral acoustic album? Well, why not? After all, the instrument's bellows are akin to a giant pair of lungs that need to be vigorously pumped to release the bright, vocal sound which Kimmo Pohjonen has a conservatory background, he has monopolised the Folk Musician of the Year poll in his native Finland over the last few years. He is prominently adept at extreme music. He can switch from a high spirited folk tune like "Kalkunni" to the exquisite "Saareti", whose slow descending lines have the gravitas of an Arvo Part composition. "Kaisla", meanwhile, is one minute of jagged acidity.

It might be a solo recording, but electronic enhancements make his instrument and voice feel a little less lonely — a whirring Techno pulse even bursts in at one point. On the title track, a delay device liberates the accordion melody, causing it to spiral up and out of itself. Switching to harmonium for "Korunni", he echoes voices rise out of its dark-hued drone. However, the most affecting passage is "Korunni", which closes the album with five minutes of austere beauty.

PAUL BARNES

DJ Vadim

USSR Lata From The Other Side

HYPERBOLIC 2004-4 CD 280P

DJ Vadim's last album project was *The Automatist*, his collaboration with The Anti-Pop Consortium and DJ Prime Cuts from The Scratch Perverts, which took his abstraction about as far as it could possibly go: ghostly traces of environmental noise fashioned into shadow soundscapes, with Prime Cuts burling out multilayers of scratching and Priest, Beans and M Sayd delivering abstract rap in a veritable ocean of consciousness. *Newer mind 'Keeping it real*, this haunting and elusive set was all about making a surreal

USSR Lata From The Other Side sees the man from Minsk emerging from this austere darkness into the light of more straightforward Hip-Hop. At least, on a superficial level. The album has its share of brilliantly simple head-nodding moments, such as the bass-heavy bounce of "It's Obscure", featuring Virginian MC Blu Rm, the percussive call and response and creative scratching of "Pomello Duro", the fast, minimal funk and lyrical nodding of *Incense From The Distorted Peoples* on "Pichon". These are testaments, both to Vadim's subliminal taste in vocalists, and perhaps most surprisingly, considering his previous output, his mastery of the smooth groove. "How To Exercise The Turntable Record Player" is an eight minute masterpiece in the art of cutting and scratching.

For all their appeal, however, many of the tracks represent simple pleasures, almost as if Vadim has swung too far the other way. *USSR Lata From The Other Side* really comes into its own when he leads the middle ground, allying those grooves to his tried and tested soundscaping skills. The apparently simple results mask some subtle complexities. "Lata From The Other Side" may well be dominated by typically off-the-wall patter from the Mud Family's Skinnymon, but the strings stretched to breaking point underneath set your skin tingling. He repeats the effect with the shimmering vocals that seem to freeze the words of "English Breakfast", as they leave the mouths of Canada's



DJ Vadim nods out

Swollen Members. Most startling of all is "Magra", featuring B-I-P and BHS from Company Flow. It's an extraordinary blend of vaporous music, box herbies, organic woodblock textures and clanking machinery, all underpinned by a linear beat that is actually a random succession of echoes drawn from these same disparate elements. In effect, Vadim is making the space around the sounds move.

The vocals acts that filter the album, ranging from children's TV commentary to self-improvement courses and Russian language lessons, are clearly intended to add an air of uneasiness, but in the face of such radical sonic engineering, they're at best annoying and at worst completely unnecessary. People will undoubtedly enjoy *USSR Lata From The Other Side* as a top flight Hip-Hop album. But the real joy comes in watching Vadim simultaneously acknowledging his B-boy roots while laying waste to their boundaries.

PETER PHILLIPS

Eddie Prévost Quartet

Continuum +

MATCHLESS RECORDINGS HM07 CD

Eddie Prévost & Veryan Weston

Concert, V

MATCHLESS RECORDINGS HM07 CD

The free jazz group which launches Continuum has lost none of its impact since the music's last release on vinyl in 1965. Recorded at the Brooklyn Jazz Festival two years earlier, the CD format finally allows the ensuing 40 minutes of shapeshifting creativity to be heard without interruption. The genre gripped by Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler and John Coltrane had generally lost its capacity to surprise by this late date, but Eddie Prévost's Quartet was not in the business of replicating tired ideas, and Continuum runs energy from

that inspirational source into an incandescent new circuit. His quartet was made up of four distinct voices, widely experienced in the adjacent forms of music making speaking beneath the jazz banner.

Prévost, the leader of lammer percussion, displays a capacity to move furiously, driving horizontally without setting into any groove template. Veryan Weston's piano playing matches the drummer's flexibility and breathless exuberance. He habitually avoids assuming the jazz pianist's persona, but in this festival context he makes playful, fleeting allusions to a range of recognisable styles. The sardonic bass of Placido Matos choreographs connections between their lines without resorting to rhythmic coercion. Saxophonist Larry Stubbins shines strikingly assured on tenor and tenaciously inquisitive on soprano. His performance here appears as remote from his later work with Simon Booth in Working Week

as from his rarefied improvisatory duo with percussionist Ray Ashbury a decade earlier.

The "V" in the CD title refers to its four bonus tracks, which the quartet recorded in a studio in 1985. Stubbins strives to match the fire of the live set on "Unpredictable Paths", otherwise the pieces foreground other facets of these outstanding improvisors.

The Prévost and Weston duo CD is very different, yet equally as impressive. Recorded on two days in June 1994, each of the two parts of *Concert, V* is divided into six sections, but there is a seamless quality to the music's conception and execution. Prévost added the "V" to the title to signal that concert is a verb, an activity rather than a finite event. Weston's playing is notably more idiosyncratic here, a personalized montage of jittery runs and fragmented melodies in the upper register, and dry, percussive chording in the lower depths. Weston has developed a style that incorporates vocings from outside strictly

pancetic traditions. His left and right hands operate like attentive, complementary players, intruding yet preserving distance and difference. Prévost generally occupies the middle ground, discreetly cohesive, while displaying his remarkable capacity to unlock the fluency of a musical situation.

JULIAN COWLEY

Quannum

Spectrum

HD MAXI HMW 110 CD228P

Back in its infancy, Mo'W owed much of its fledgling reputation to a small Californian Hip-hop label called Sevensies. Among the albums James Lawelle licensed from this artist-run collective were the debut sets from Blackkious, Lata and, of course, the Triptop benchmark, *Introducing* by DJ Shadow. So it's fitting that, with the label back on its feet after protracted legal wrangles, the first truly great release from a rejuvenated Mo'W should also come from that same collective, now renamed Quannum.

Featuring the core members of the collective — Shadow, Latéef and Lyns Born (Lutyns), and Chief Xue and Gift Of Gab (Blackkious) — together with an array of guests including Jurassic 5, Company Flow's B-P and The Automator, it's as varied a Hip-hop album as you'll hear all year. The biggest surprise may be the back seat role Shadow takes in the proceedings, only pushing his audacious skills forward once, to blend duo space and trash Metal overload on "Divine Intervention". Elsewhere, Blackkious reinvents the momentum generated by their recent A2E EP and Lyns Born confirms his reputation as an MC more interested in metaphor than propaganda. Born as part of Lutyns ("Storm Warning") and solo ("It Changed My Mind"), he introduces a storytelling element that probes the underbelly of American life delivered in a Tom Waits drawl that further adds to the effect.

Just as the individual tracks display individual talents, the collective tracks highlight the Quannum crew's solidarity. "Concentration", "Extraordinary" and particularly "Bombonyal" are pure old school bravado, as each MC steps up and throws down the challenge. You can hear the joy in their voices — and the confidence. They know they can't be bested.

PETER PHILLIPS

Terry Riley

Reed Straws In C (Mistral)

ORGAN OF CORN 2 CD

Terry Riley

Clonon III

ORGAN OF CORN 3 CD

Two more instalments in the Cornical Foundation's programme of 60s Riley music: the proto-minimalist's limited edition first LP

Reed Streams (1966) is resued here with a big band version of it in C. Olson II is a previously unreleased 1967 recording made with a band of Swedish high school students. All the pieces except Riley's method of "pattern fields"—that is, the phased sounding of identical highly rhythmic phrases to produce strongly static, yet shifting tonalities.

Riley's most influential composition in C is the highlight. This version is described as a "psychedelic big-band adaptation." Well, not that the truth. Riley was clearly influenced by jazz as well as psychedelia. Arranged for saxes, brass and rhythm section, with numerous percussion instruments, its pounding not-quite-funk rhythms maintain a gripping tension between its static and propulsive elements.

The recording was made in Montreal in 1970. In *Unlabeled* under the direction of Walter Boudeau. As Boudeau writes in his recent sleeve notes, the "funk" is taken at a slower tempo. His young musicians were from a variety of backgrounds, from rock to classical, and aside from the crickets and fluted notes there's a basic divergence from the composer's intention—the repeated three eighth-note figures were mistakenly played as triplets due to a misreading of the score. But Boudeau is right in finding the effect very powerful, an improvement even.

The other pieces on the same disc are pure systems music. The two works that made up the original *Reed Streams*, *Unlabeled Organ* and *Donon Reed*, were recorded in Riley's New York studio in 1966, and here get a digital remastering from the original tapes. *Unlabeled Organ* is a section from Riley's early phase-shifting piece *Keyboard Studies*, performed on a rather raffish keyboard. From the perspective it is somewhat underwhelming—unlabeled, in fact. *Donon Reed* is a more varied and interesting piece for Riley's soprano sax and a tape delay set up.

In 1967 Riley was commissioned to compose a work for the orchestra and chorus of the Naxos Music School to be broadcast on Swedish Radio. Basing it on the same principles as in C, he wrote *Olson II* upon his arrival in Sweden, featuring a part for himself on soprano sax. The music proved hard to perform, but despite suggestions from the music school's teachers, Riley refused to conduct. He explained, "I don't stand in front of the orchestra and keep them busy because that would be against the idea of what I'm trying to do, because they are all supposed to be phasing. The music is not conductable, everyone has to join in themselves." The students took Riley's message to heart and after he left, unsuccessfully performed to have their orchestra director fired. One can only speculate about the effect the affair had on the poor old pedagogue, shocked and baffled by his encounter with California hippydrom. But you have to wonder about the musical results too. Poorly coordinated, roughly executed and badly recorded, it is also rhythmically flat compared with the

performance of in C. On the evidence, Olson II is not a great lost classic of early minimalism.

ANDY HAMILTON

Royal Trux

Watermark CD 0420002
cassette WSCSP 02

Just in case you were forgetting how evil rock 'n' roll can be, here come Royal Trux to add a few more awful tests of their own. Like last year's *Acceleration*, their latest release weighs in at slightly under 40 minutes, which is approximately the duration of a decent vinyl LP. Such retrospective gestures seem entirely appropriate. If anyone's earned the right to call themselves veterans of disorder, it's main Trux members Neil Hagerty and Jennifer Herrema. The format may have changed, but the spirit remains the same.

Take the opening cut, "Waterpark", with its superfast power chords, clattering cymbals and a line that actually starts with the magic words, "I'm on." Sure, you may have heard it all before, but not like this. "Stop" is a swooning, toxic ballad with the liquor and Marlboro smoke still on its breath, while "Second Skin" and "Widows Trip" just want to sit on your face and have fun. Pleasurably, "Lunch Money" and "Yo Say" blend timbales and slide guitars to conduct the Tean-Latino trash styles found on the previous album's "Another Year." Thereafter, it's a long crazy descent through the unstructured sonic wilderness of "Sick-Azz Dog" and the urgent live associations of "Coming Out Party" to the majestic closing number "Blue Is The Frequency," an extended series of guitar solos that conjures up the elyptic psychedelia of late-60s LA. For a full, jaw-dropping eight minutes, the whole world is filled with the sound of bright sunshine, steel and cracked concrete. What a way to go.

KEVIN HOLLINGS

Archie Shepp/Kahil El'Zabar's Ritual Trio

Conversations
DELUXE 02514 CD

Archie Shepp is most often lauded for the series of explosive albums, such as *Fire Music* and *Home Too Tight*, that he cut for Impulse! in the mid-to-late 60s. The breadth of his tone, the fury of his attack, and the reasoned eloquence with which he defended the New Thing against critical berbs got him admitted to American free jazz's pantheon. Some even saw him as a worthy successor to Coltrane, a player who could somehow transcend academic technique and speak to the spirits. Which perhaps goes some way towards explaining the vehemence which greeted his 70s turn away from the Eclectic Gial.

But while Shepp's fire may have died down, as *Conversations* shows, there are still some traces of life in the embers. The surprisingly inspired pairing with drummer Kahil El'Zabar's

Ritual Trio brings out a hushed and meditative reverence in Shepp's playing, a quality that his 90s recordings have hitherto sadly lacked. The fact that the set was recorded a few days after the early death of veteran Chicago bassist Fred Hopkins, to whom the disc is dedicated, is also important. For once, the players have a context and a justification for passions that might otherwise have reeked of tired Coltrane resurrectionism. However, at its best, on tracks like "Conversation 1" and "Big Fire" (the latter even features some possible vocals), the group attains a slow, hypnotic swing that aches with loss, distress with accumulated wisdom, and manages not to betray too many expectations. El'Zabar can occasionally plod, but Shepp goes him back into life. Plebschi Favors on bass and An Brown on tenor and piano are both exemplary throughout.

Conversations is not a challenging record, but it is an honest one: it proves that old warriors can sometimes age gracefully. Their weapons may not be as sharp as they once were, but they can still do some damage.

ALAN CUPPINGS

Solex

Pick Up
HATJATOR CD 0323332 CD

If Esbail Esseklin will forgive a backhanded compliment, I found her latest Solex incarnation a real Ally McBeil of a proposition.

I started out deeply irritated by its dippy la-la pop, sunk in gloom at the prospect of something that featured not one, not two, but three exclamation marks in the ranks of its three CD titles. But I ended up half-said—drawn in by the subterranean cut under its brittle party hat.

There's something *Ally McBeil* about Pick Up, both its good and bad aspects: Esseklin's take on things is disarmingly "totally" in a world which prizes gritty authenticity—or can only countenance "thoraxity" if it's a male one of dark moths and violent moments and ruff edges. She goes against the idea that the singer/songwriter has to go further 'in' to dredge up truer, more personal fragments. Halfway between parinola and bathroom stall gossip, Pick Up subverts the unbroken Law that says: Voice (whether in court or in a room) must be the site for whatever truth Pick Up stages a different scene: it drifts through concert halls and dusty shops and back rooms, peering together a firmy molecular pop from peripheral wave-lengths. With Solex, the question of the singer's "who" is dissolved into a slythymy play with moths and flutter and non sequitur rhythms. Esseklin's radar is wearing giant leg katchy drop earrings. She's the anti-Beth.

There are two equal concerts here: Pick Up's music is "played" via Esseklin's own bootling samples of live music; and its lyrics are composed using likewise sampled real-time (or time-out) conversations. (Pick up) as in

LEE HAZLEWOOD





1970 album
Cowboy in Sweden

New album of popular standards
Farmisht, Faltance, Organs, AFRI and me




1983 album
Trouble in a Lonesome Town

1971 album
Requires For An Almost Lady

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what is just picked up from the air, and 'jack up' as erotic immorality [indulgence] I have reservations about the double bluff — which seems (and too often sounds) like one of those things that was far more meaningful to the musician than it can ever be to any listener, whose honest reaction is to say, well, so what? As its word, the Big Concept only renders Sorel ten times less odd and borrowed and askew than when Essink was previously just 'being there'. For all the supposed outreach of these two peeps, every song sounds pretty much the same, which is odd when you think about it.

When it doesn't work we're left with something that sounds like a mildly electro version of some awful English indie turkey like Iles. At its best, Essink's Sorel makes it seem to function like a fetish object — a scrying game letting her step into a phantasm of solipsism. Six songs (episodes?) Here really hit the mark. "Oh Blimey" has something of the faux reggae stonk of early Sits. Other Sorel after signs sound halfway between 60s poppet and avant garde music, like a Gaudinoid girl without "Hansel calling for" (arranging) the things. "Snappy & Cooly" is fun-reconstructed New Wave — a last echo from a forgotten heritage of anti-epical people like The Shins, Theoretical Girls, Lazy Mercier. Descend: you funk, pop on the blink. "Another Tune Like 'Not Fade Away'" is silver-troty fly-like, indisputably LOVELY pop, like Sorel Vorticism on a caffeine jag or Drew Barrymore Sings Shaun Ryder.

That still leaves eight tracks which try too hard or don't quite click — or they annoyed the screaming disco la-las out of me. 14 bags of this rich confectionery white chocolate pretzel pop, anyone? is just way too drying for any palate.

IAN PENNIE

Alexander Spence

Oar

SUN2002 SC11075 CD

Various Artists

More Oar: A Tribute To The Spick Album

88004M (88602) CD

There is no less terrible 'legendary' album than Alexander 'Spick' Spence's 1969 Oar, on which the San Francisco psych-rock pioneer, freshly released from a prison psychiatric ward, sawered out the final few drops of his genius before he lost his marbles altogether. As a developer of pop forms into howled madness — rather than their usual temerous, neat melody — it's unique, almost, its only real kin are Syd Barrett's The Madcap Laughs and John Foscum's Mondo Ladies And Gents Just A T-Sort. Unfortunately, the pop specificity that had carried him through his time in Mobo Grape and Jefferson Airplane had been deplored by general effect the sound of Oar is the sound of a dark night of the soul, but its stumbling one-in-a-kind

overbuds and half formed tunes make it very hard to listen to.

The received wisdom is that Oar's 'tuber music', pure because Spence was too close to a breakdown to fabricate through artifice. In reality, most of it just sounds shabby and tentative. The good news is that the latest reissue restores the foggy original mix (as well as adding five more tentative doodles), and a few of the songs are really lovely (particularly "Life Hand" and the flanged-out, throbbing "Greyhound"). The bad news is that it's probably only really life-changing if you encountered it stored some 25 years ago.

More Oar may be the first tribute album where virtually every track is an improvement on the original in terms of coherence, at least, but also in terms of subtlety and grace, if not mood. Spence's "Halo Of Gold" is a shambling, meandering duster, Beck sucks all the slack out of it, treats it as a demo, craps up the arrangement and sings it with the confidence the original couldn't summon up. Likewise, Tom Waits dries the cheap thrum of Spence's "Bosco Of Bones" into a guitar and percussion solo to suspension wire. Spence's drops a pen, and roars like he's calling heaven down. More Oar also has the distinction of being the first album to include both Robert Plant and Spacy New Zealand sound-poet Alastair Galbraith, which must count for something. The unlabeled bonus track was recorded by Spence himself shortly before he died.

DOUGLAS WOLK

Spontaneous Music Ensemble

Low Profile

PMMP 4031 CD

Some debates are beyond resurrection, viz the one about recording leaving only a pale shadow of music's total power. But just because we've entered some sort of transitional, post-performance age dominated by retrieval systems, it doesn't mean we're not allowed to express regret for the absence of certain inescapable inevitables (or m-in-ef-ables, as John Stevens might have put it) in our digital media.

This version of The Spontaneous Music Ensemble — the late John Stevens on drums, cornet and voice, Nigel Coombes playing violin, cellist Colin Wood and guitarist Roger Smith — fulfilled every expectation of improvised music. The quality of their listening was intense, their attention to detail was meticulous, their responses were endlessly varied and engaging, their instrumental skills were given over to the creation of an unfolding group relationship rather than a showcase of parallel virtuosity. All of which may explain why not a huge number of people liked them.

I loved them. I miss the sight of this group, the singularity of their sound, the richness and unintentional comedy of their collective behaviour in front of an audience.

John scattering dicks and rustles from his man drum let like a deranged dolphin, head thrown back to let out ghostly moans and ululations. Roger Smith apparently suffering finger aphasia in the quest to pinpoint the smallest notes of accidentals, he always quit instrument Nigel Coombes, ploughing through trace memories of Paganini, Arias ascending, Psycho and Chick still wearing velvet in the tailcoat days of punk. Colin Wood sepphorim and caught as a hat stand, seemingly perched above the nervous ferocity of this near audible scrapping and scraping yet deep within it.

There is a moment, 16 minutes into the very long "The Only Gazer An American Soldier Shot Was Anton Webern", when Stevens drops a fantastic cornet blast into the insectivorous scurrying. Like a platoon of inebriated mages paralyzing by the incoming force of a predatory superbug, the others throw up a wall of silence in self-defense. The recovery is beautiful to hear, the process of improvisation and being, as in a painting of medical students surveying a dissected corpse. Less than five minutes later in the same piece, recorded in Derby in 1977, Stevens does it again, this time unleashing his famous Wild London Buddhist chant. Again, Coombes, Wood and Smith play musical statues. It takes them a little while to make the decision but when they clam up, they do so as one, momentarily abandoning Stevens, the implacable Tibetan monk, to a harsh spotlight of their spontaneous construction.

Listening for only a few years before Wood disappeared to India (I always wondered where he'd got to), this was a group that relished such glorious incidents of embarrassment and hiatus. The mutual incomprehension tended to be addressed with a hurricane of hilarity and beer in the pub afterwards. In his workshops and groups, Stevens always passed on an vital lesson by example — be serious without being po-faced — and this created a robust context for music that was delicate yet far from fragile.

The last two tracks are recordings of the trio, made in London in 1984 and 1988. Listening to the quartet hear a music of implication. Individual events are too fleeting, too fugitive, to be fully absorbed. This was music that refused to hang about or to make the obvious moves, a febrile cloud of flames, spot notes rhythms, blunted and truncated scales, drones that lost the will to drone, patches too brittle or transient to accommodate mobility, lent the promise ascended then dropped dead out of the sky.

The trio was slightly different, more a three dimensional geometry of vivid colour lines, paints of light and odd surface protruberances. "Notes With Elbow", so called because Stevens had been advised not to play because of an elbow problem, highlights the difference between the three players. Playing mini-trumpet, Stevens brings some of his love for free jazz into a group that was essentially chamber. This was

reckless music that somehow expressed sensitivity through insensitivity and if Stevens wanted to blast it, then the others weren't about to damp his ardor.

So, if this music was as outrageously good, why did audiences prefer tort of inferior virtue? To my uncertain knowledge, *Low Profile* is only the second release for this SPIE quartet, the first being *Boysom*, released on Incus in 1977 and sounding even better now than it did then. They should have been filmed. More of their age should have been recorded. On the other hand, perhaps there's just about enough. To listen closely to their music can be exhausting, like tuning in to the central nervous system of an art colony: like hydrotherapy with tractors. No rest, no comfort, no soft fluffy bottom. Just search and reflect, as John would say. How sad that he's no longer here.

DWIGHT TOPP

Terre Thaelmitz

Replacible Rubato
PULSE/PLATINUM/PCD 02286P

"You know that thing men do with ladies to have a baby" was a playground rumour the morning after "Are Friends Electric?" was on Top Of The Pops. Well, the Tubeway Army singer does it with a computer. Unpacking this CD of Richard Clayderman plays the hits of Gary Numan is a reminder of the troubling vision this reptilian shadow of the synth-age presented to pop audiences in 1979, when his ascetic frame counterweighed against a chain full of sunny Stargate disco dance units. You find a poster, just as in Tubeway's original *Replicas* EP, only with a logossed, black-and-white Terre Thaelmitz in place of Numan. It's the kind of poster you might once have got free with *Smash Hits* magazine, with the lyrics reproduced on the reverse. Here, you get one of Thaelmitz's superelectronic tracts in Terre's proliferating metaverse, these things are important.

As a follow-up to *De Robotter Rubato*, Thaelmitz's 1995 album of Kraftwerk pops for piano, this is the more immediately eyebrow-raising, since the trajectory of Numan's frantically embracing 80s career, along with his openly Tubeway affiliations, has hindered his assimilation into any kind of 90s electro canon. On both the Kraftwerk and Numan sets, his piano versions of well-known electronic tunes—some played live, mixed with programmed flourishes—simultaneously proffer the originals for comic scrutiny by recasting them in an ethereal lounge piano mood, and position these transformed "hits" as launchpads for discussion of various aspects of socio-musical transformation—a subject that lets Thaelmitz's pacemaker ticking (see *The Wire* 180).

So, I'd love to be able to say it doesn't matter what this record actually sounds like if you already loathe Gary Numan, these vaporous vampes on Numan standards such as "Down In The Park," "Sister Surprise,"

"Cars" and "Praying To The Angels" won't persuade you otherwise. The fact that Numan himself, through his manager Steve Haines, apparently approves of this project is neither here nor there. For Thaelmitz, Numan was his generative channel; long, the frequency of the word "ter" in his lyrics evidence that the way he was juggling notions of truth and concealed identity chimes with Terre's own attempts to present a music that doesn't distract the listener with tedious details about self-expression. Numan may be a figure of fascination to a particular age group, but despite what Edomorph tell you, you're past the tracks' superficial glaze. *Replicas Rubato* seems something of a stale exercise.

ROB YOUNG

Adrian Uley & Mount Vernon Arts Lab

Wormzoster
COCOE CDH040 CD

Lasting just 21 minutes, this gem of a pocket symphony was brought into being through the good offices of Her Majesty's Royal Mail. Portishhead multi-instrumentalist Adrian Uley and Mount Vernon Arts Lab mainstay Ewert Mulholland spent much of this spring posting tapes between Bristol and Glasgow, each adding (according to sleeve notes that eagerly subscribe to the doptronic popular science of equipment fetishism) tones from vintage synths such as the Art 2600 Duophonic, the Korg MS20 and the Farfelli Utopia Square Wave Oscillator, among others.

It's not hard to see who contributed what to the resulting music. Wormzoster's opening section is downbeat, moodily jazzy, pushed along by laid-back brushed snares. Elsewhere spacier drones and barbles dominate. But closer listening suggests that Uley and Mulholland have done more than simply graft some Mount Vernon Arts Lab noodling onto a melancholic Portishhead outtake. In truth, *Wormzoster* is a closely integrated and emotionally effective study in entropy.

As always, this music speaks through its sonic details. A seriously distorted kick drum sounding like the distant clump of a mortar bomb deep beneath the opening section's icy, burnished tones. Later, a neat edit replaces the original drum loop with a clinical percussion pattern and ciphers in a doubtfully grooved exa in Just Innovation. The music grows sparser and more hesitant, eventually disintegrating into radio static and muted phone signals before a halting, haunting coda blends in different Debussy flutes and accelerating computer noise.

It's an evocative and intriguing collage—but can anybody confirm one way or the other whether the Withshire market town of Wormzester really looks like this?

CHRIS SHARP

the boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

In 1971 *Ainma-Sound*, a duo consisting of Paul and Lorne Fuchs, spent six months canoeing round Germany setting up in public and blasting their music at the people. Free or not, it's difficult to imagine your average German burgher waiting happily to the freeform ruck of *Music For All* (Algi Marghen PLANA-AATES 027 CD), recorded after their six month trek in a Düsseldorf studio, with engineer Wil Neubauer adding electronics to the duo's metal percussion, custom-built instruments and voices. But over two long tracks their sonic strands coalesce into a mesmerizing primal rumble, incorporating clattering metal, the garbled calls of Paul's hysterical and Lorne's elated voice, running through Ligeti-like, ring-modulated phonic exercises. A fascinating, if sometimes faltering document.

"Champagne/Getting high again" wasn't the couple's ender. **Kevin Ayers** was the 70s radical free music faction. Yet for all the aristocratic whimsy of "Champagne Cowboy Blues", where he sounds like a Noel Coward ingenue who's inadvertently stumbled over an LSD picnic in the summer of love, Ayers also has his more anarchic side. That spirit is evident on his 1972 album *Wohlbefindensgewiss* (Honest 7243521 1972 CD), in the way he parodies sad day with David Bowie's lush yet wayward orchestration, the explosive harmonics disrupting "Song From A Bottom Of A Well" and the sheer daintiness of his Velvet Underground dose pastiche "Stranger In Blue Sweedie Shoes". Spruced up for Harvest's 30th birthday celebrations, it is one of the Brit baroque/progressive specialist label's few memorable releases.

Dizzy heights of live improvisation are captured on an excellent series of (self-titled) Indian releases, recorded by the Swedish label Armpo in Stockholm and Paris between 1975-82. The late **Pandit Nikhil Banerjee** (Armpo AHIC0904 CD) was a master of the sitar, here he weaves an elegant path through the strange mayamimor shifts of *Raga Rasi*. His intuitive partnership with the tabla virtuoso Armita Chatterjee formed one of the great teams of Indian classical music. **Pandit Ravi Narayan** (Armpo AHIC0901 CD) coaxes exquisite melodies from the bowed sarangi, lingering on the aching fluttered fourth of *Raga Rani-Kalyan* to elegiac effect. The sarod, more compact than the sitar, has a perrier, clearer tone, less coloured by the ringing ambience of sympathetic strings. The younger sarod

player **Ustad Anwar Ali Khan** (Armpo AHIC0902 CD) performs two shorter versions of ragas associated with the afternoon. Meanwhile, **K. Sridhar** (Armpo AHIC0903 CD), also on sarod, has a dreamy quality to his playing, as though drifting down his own inner river.

One of the truly great works of the Indian avant garde, **Dedalus's** *Pozi Inedit* 75-75 + *Material Per Tre Execuzii* E Nastro Magnifico (Dica UP3320 CD) compiles an unreleased third album and most of their second, both recorded in the mid-70s. The previously unheard music consists of free jazz and broken tunes played on sax, Fender Rhodes piano, drums, cello and accordion. The rest is given over to material from Dedalus' astonishing second LP. Nothing on their straightforward Progressive jazz rock debut prepared anyone for this record's elegant classical free improvisation interspersed with noisy electronics and musique concrete. They pull off the impressive acrobatic feat of beautifully placing these diverse elements at the same time as being completely unhinged.

A decade later, Texas's **Buthole** *Surfers* gave the word "unhinged" a bad name when they processed their conkyte hardcore and raucous slacko jam through the decidedly unpsychedelic disintegration of recklessly drug-wrecked minds. They would only be remembered as a cautionary example to young kids off illegal pharmaceuticals, if they weren't so fucked-up awesome. Indeed, from a narc's perspective, the most pernicious aspect of the *Surfers* is that you can't imagine this music being made without chemical intervention. That didn't make it, or them, clever but it did release them from all inhibitions. Lovingly treated and rescued in digital form by former *Surfer* Paul Corley's label, their belated 1984 debut album proper, *Psychic*, *Powless*.

Another *Man's* S (Lutino Bigger Vml LBV03 CD), and its 1986 follow up *Rembrandt Pussyhorse* (coupled with the Creamom EP, Lutino Bigger Vml LBV04 CD) are tremendous, churning, burning rock. The collective Butthole mud stoners through songs like a spinning disco ball, with vociferous Gabby Haines coming on like a demented cattle auctioneer one moment and glooming party down the next, the guitarists shelling away from the jump rhythms to orbit an exotic new sun, only to wake up and discover they're really buxboozies buxboozing a striking dead dog in Tijuana. (Reviewed by Mike Barnes, Olive Ball, Eric Graham and Bob Kapf)



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in brief avant rock

Reviewed by Tom Ridge

Del Rey Dirty DEBRIS RECORDS NO NUMBER CD

Seki Before The Last Song At Wounded Hill Resonance Music Co. Del Rey are based in Chicago. Other than that, the fashionable anonymity of their sleeve art gives little away. The music on this debut EP remains inescapably trapped in a no man's land located somewhere between the rock prefixes of math- and post-. The tracks are relatively rich in texture, but Del Rey still subscribe to the meandering, bass-heavy rhythms that have characterised so much instrumental altrock for the last five years. Nothing original here.

While the title of Seki's album might suggest a strong dose of alt. Country gloom, this Californian quartet actually hold off in the opposite direction to play gritty, effulgent guitar music. Seki's music has some structural similarities with Del Rey, but tone-wise, they're altogether rougher edged. Their inclusion of lyrics (however indistinct) breaks up the relentlessness of the attack. The cheerfully titled "To Dig A Child's Grave" demonstrates Seki's dynamic way of creating tension by restricting the noise to short, dramatic bursts.

Joe Fair & Kramer The Sound Of Mudzoo SHENKINS SHENKINS CD

Subtitled "An unfinished symphony in 12 parts", this second collaboration between two veterans of the US avant beat scene (the first was in 1984) has been thrown together in a matter of days, with Kramer recording all the music, and Joe Fair providing a typically obscure, rambling set of lyrics. Throughout Kramer's arrangements are versatile and provocative, but the semi-spoken, semi-rapped lyrics, delivered in Fair's whining voice, swiftly become monotonous. "Pretty Angel Eyes" achieves a kind of surreal beauty and "Elenor" has a terrific garage rock hook, but it's generally very hit and miss.

Fiona Field B31 RAT CAT TATTOO COLOP JESSAMINE/EAR Living Sound JESSAMINE HESRO CD

Two satellites spinning in from the UK constellation of the space rock universe. The second album from London-based collective Fiona is a beguiling collection between dynamic kosmische grooves and electronic sound experiments, creating a patchwork of different moods. The disc's varied nature is the result of the group improvising pieces, either solo or in different

combinations. For all its shifting styles, the album is remarkably cohesive.

The final release from US cosmic cowboys Jessamine is a live collaboration with Sonic Boom (as EAR) from 1996, now released on the group's own label in a limited edition. Recorded in Seattle, *Living Sound* contains a single improvised piece in which the participants explore frequency modulation, electronic dissonance and the cathartic effects of full-blown, cosmic freakout. With Sonic Boom adding Moog, percussion and Theremin, this recording is quite a contrast to the more structured material Jessamine came up with on their last studio release. Don't Stay Too Long

Freeway Bruised words and words UCCO CD

Londoners Freeway have a delicate melancholy, a raw, unpolished folk rock style and a stark, open delivery. There's probably more feeling than technique driving them, but that's no bad thing, and the music sits somewhere between quiet introspection and a more ardent guitar style. These two elements work best together on the snarling "Today Would Be Nice", where the pulsating rhythm and slide guitar are reminiscent of Mazy Star.

Half Film The Road To The Crabber devil in the woods DWAZO CD

Red Stars Theory Life In A Bubble Can Be Beautiful NOX AND GO TO H1 CD
Half Film's second album doesn't mark a huge step forward from last year's debut, *East Of Nowhere*, except that the songs are a little stronger and there's less reliance on minimalist, slowcore atmospheres. Here, the San Francisco trio augment their basic line-up with slide guitar and organ. All well and good, except they've only just cracked how to work within the limitations of their slowly unfurling song structures and don't appear to be that sure what to do with the extra fire power.

No such problem besets Red Stars Theory, who are an altogether more eclectic bunch, blending together fragments of dub, folk and Country in some really compelling, languorous and melodic music. Seth Warren's violin adds a different texture to the standard two guitars, bass and drums. Their songs vary from the shimmering grace of "A Sailor's Warning" (which is reminiscent of "This Mortal Coil") to the spectral ambience of "Rising Ghosts".

John Paul Jones Zooma DECPUNE GLOBAL MOBILE GPM5005 CD

On his first solo album, released by Robert Fripp's label, the former Led Zeppelin bassist seems unable to decide whether to ignore his past or embrace it. The opening salvo of Zooma consists of thunderous, neo-psychedrals, dominated by Jones's bass playing. It's undeniably visceral but it's also pretty dull. Then it becomes apparent that JPJ is basically reinventing his past, with Pete Thomas giving a far approximation of John Bonham's drum style on the throbbing "Goose" and "H1 Fingers". Finally, Jones throws in the towel and gives it the full heavy blues treatment for "Snake Eyes" and "Nexus Blues", either of which would have sounded right at home on Presence.

Monroe Mustang The Elephant Sound JAGANMATH JAG11 CD

Monroe Mustang map out a similar territory to Will Osham with their brand of mountain, raw Country blues rippled with psychedelic undertones. On the buried home photography of the cover art to the evocative drawl of the vocals, you don't have to be Philip K. Dick to deduce where Monroe Mustang are coming from, but they have a wide enough musical palette (positive drum machines, ghostly harmonies) to deliver feelings of yawning predictability.

Nod Radio Giddy-Up! shells ure RECORDS SPL003 CD

The ghost of underground rock past continues to cast a long shadow over New York City, and Nod are content to skulk in its shade. *Raise Giddy-Up!* is like Talking Heads (circa 1977) without the busyness, Television without the virtuosity. The sparse, brittle sound — the hollow whack of the drums and the dejected wailing guitar — has a certain charm, as do the cracked, falsetto vocals, but it's never certain whether Nod are aiming high and falling short, or drawing ironic attention to the gap between what they actually sound like and what they think we think they ought to sound like.

Upsilon Acrux In The Acrux Of The Upsilon Kinet ACROXIS ACRUVA CD

Upsilon Acrux The Last Pirates Of Upsilon ure records 005 CD
Hailing from San Diego, Upsilon Acrux are an unstable mix of free jazz and hardcore fusion dominated by an astonishing lack of splatter. These two albums each provide some 70 minutes of irrefragable musical invention, from high-speed guitar and percussion play-ups to fast jazz blowouts and Ambient pieces interrupted by blasts of furious activity. The second album is perhaps more lively and restlessly experimental than the debut, but together they amount to an impressive body of work. □

in brief classical

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

Thomas Adès *Asyla* EMI CLASSICS

CD 555681829 CD
Adès is the brightest British star rising in the firmament of classical orthodoxy, drawing respect from establishment figures such as Simon Rattle, who conducts *The City Of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra* on *Asyla*. Adès has formidable command of earlier musical idioms, allowing him to hint constantly at historical continuities, while niggard control of orchestral resources asserts a distinctive musical identity. Humorous touches lighten the wily melismatic *Concerto Canoco* and the abstract miniature *These Promises Are Altered*, both of which Adès conducts, as well as his *Chamber Symphony*—but still he'll be well.

Donald Berman *The Unknown* DVOE CD 811 CD

Donald Berman studied with John Krieger, and has compiled work left unfinished by that eminent schooler of Charles Ives's music, who died in 1991. *The Unknown* has presents short piano pieces, some previously unpublished, others resiled in new critical editions. Ives used these studies to explore compositional possibilities, but Berman rescues them unequivocally from the status of incidental sketches. His dramatic readings reflect writing that merits consideration with the most challenging and enduring of Ives's music. Carl Rugger's *Excursions: Four Orchestral Piano*, paying tribute to both Ives and Krieger, concludes this essential set.

Margaret Brouwer *Crosswinds* CRI 821 CD

The string quartet *Crosswinds* filters the landscape and folk music of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains through a compositional voice refreshingly detached from school and trends. Impressionistic personal and good-humoured, it shares with Brouwer's other work from the mid-1990s, an emigrating directness. *Prélude And Voice* for cello and chamber group, and *Day Of An Alien*, for solo flute and electronics, are more light-hearted without being lightweight. *Sonata For Horn And Piano*, although more earnest, asserts the undiluted immediacy of person-to-person address.

Richard Dunlap *Odle To The Stratum* SANTA BARBARA CONTEMPORARY ARTS FORUM NAHGA CONTEMPORARY

This CD accompanies an exhibition being staged in Santa Barbara in celebration of Dunlap's work as musician and visual artist over 30 years. His numerous collaborators

during that period have included Hal Walston, Pauline Oliveros and Flaxus artists such as Willem De Ridder and Albin Knowles. He has also worked regularly with Daniel Lentz, a Californian composer committed to beautiful sounds. Comparable priority is granted to sensual attractiveness in Dunlap's solo work using sampling keyboard, yet the surface pleasure never seems indulgent, and muscular interludes confirm an unusually intelligent approach to post-minimalist options.

Elen Fullman *Change Of Direction* WWW.ARTSONA.ORG CD
Elen Fullman took the hand of *Memphis* when Elen Fullman when she was one year old. Further rock contact occurred in 1992 with a guest spot for her long-string instrument on the album *Vib Vib* by Texas group *Pro D*. Dondorfer. Her rich, resonant drone music has previously been showcased on an album recorded in 1989 for Paul Panthey's *Adapt* label, and on *Body Music* (1993), released by Phil Nabel's *XO Records*. More recently, she has worked with Pauline Oliveros and *The Deep Listening Band* on the CD *Suspended Music*, issued by *Panegyrum* in 1997. Her long-string performance on *Change Of Direction* suggests fundamental affinities with Oliveros's accordion music.

Simon Haslam *Alotie* — BLACK BOX DEMO1014 CD
A saxophonist's tour of minimalism is similar vein to Jon Gibson's memorable *In Good Company* (1992). The two coincide with notions of the same area from John Adams's *Now In China*. Gibson achieved more variety, with inclusion of jazz-tinged pieces by Terry Jennings and Terry Riley. Haslam's version of Bowie and Ennio's *Warsaw* does little to lessen the mix of Adams, Michael Nyman, Arvo Part and Graham Fitch, relentlessly pretty and at times rendered doubly so by soft-focus production. Beautifully played, undeniably attractive, but too familiar to excite.

Scott Lindroth *Human: Gestures* COMPASSION MUSIC, ISS CD
Scott Lindroth's teachers have included electroacoustic maestros Jacob Druckman and Roger Reynolds. His *Relations To Algor*, a chamber piece with tape, featured on *Bang On A Can's Live Volume 1* (1992). Here, electronics interact intimately with cello on *Trova Rima*, but seem to figure subliminally throughout. Lindroth approaches *String Quartet* as a detached construction of a musical system rather than a medium for

expression. *Due For Visions* explores relationships of articulation and mechanism, while human gestures and cybernetic sensibility seem bound together in *Dinosaur*. *Arnie Music Ensemble's* hyper-precise performance of *Light*.

Wynton Marsalis *A Fiddler's Tale* SONY CLASSICAL/COLUMBIA SIRESONS CD
Wynton Marsalis *At The Octonon* BALLA SONY CLASSICAL/COLUMBIA SIRESONS CD

Fuel for endless debate here. Regardless of the vociferously stated preferences of jazz critics, Marsalis has invested his energies in composing a music theatre piece and a string quartet. *A Fiddler's Tale* is modelled on Stravinsky's *L'Histoire Du Soldat*, using the same instrumentation. Words by writer Stanley Crouch are vigorously recited by André De Shields. The chamber group plays impeccably, but is rarely allowed to test the elasticity of the music's neo-classical contours. The sociologically faulty saint of the string quartet, programmatically entitled *At The Octonon*, Balla seems custom-built to secure admission to the official archives of Americana. It is coupled with an orchestral suite, compiling instrumental sections from the recording of *A Fiddler's Tale*.

Roman Mints & Evgenia Chudinovich *Transformations* BLACK BOX DEMO1025 CD

Mints plays a nightclub fiddler in the new movie *Moscow On Transformations*, the virtuosic young Russian violinist is joined by Ukrainian pianist Chudinovich. His racy style and acid tone bring an unexpected edge to Bart's *Furber*, and add bite to *Penderek's* *Ministry*. The duo also tackles less well-known pieces by Schnittke, Gubaidulina and Lutoslawski, and premieres new pieces by Arlen Vaxelov and Elena Langer. The musicians make effective use of the various tensions implied by this combination of instruments.

Heinrich Poos *Magnificat/Choral Works* WERGO WERGO CD
Poos, now 70, belongs solidly in the mainstream of European choral composition. The consonance of his writing and its clarity of shape reflect a particular orientation: his self-appointed task is to redress the dismemberment of Orphic, the incarnation of action from apart during *Bach's* *Christmas*. Yet so ecstatic, heterodox voices are unleashed here. *Pavement* dissonance is soon subjugated to rational musical principles tailored to satisfy conservative tastes.

Bernfried EG *Prove* BERNFRIED EG PROVE WERGO WERGO CD
Prove has the pedigree of a heavyweight. During the 1980s he studied with Klaus Huber, and took courses with Elliott Carter and Brian Ferneyhough. More recently he has

undertaken research at IRCAM. This recording documents aspects of his compositional output since 1988, offering a variety of resources: solo piano, flute, sax with electronics, trombone and tape, string trio. In each case he anatomizes sound's deep structure. Crucially, in the course of probing spectral harmonies, Prove creates vivid music.

Timothy Salter *Lacrimae* SALTER MUSIC 1233 CD

Salter regularly conducts and writes for *The Ian Singer Singers*, his *Lacrimae* Rites, which lasts 22 minutes, requires them to convey "bars for the nature of things". In fact, this is a characteristically restrained meditation on mutability and the sublime mysteries of the eternal, avoiding melodrama. Cellist Paul Macken and organist Thola Myers add suitably muted coloration, enhancing choral work which suggests resignation rather than pining anxiety.

Pino Tracanna & Corrado Guarino *Gesualdo* UNASOHN 6677 CD
The vocal music of Carlo Gesualdo, who died in 1613, occupies a distinctive place in musical history on account of its idiosyncratic deployment of dissonance and daring chromaticism. Jazz reinterpretation of such an individualistic composer might appear a recipe for ill-advised mannerism, but this project is highly persuasive. Guarino's arrangements of Gesualdo's madrigals serve as springboard for improvisations by a double quartet of jazz and chamber musicians. They frame *Piano Pia De Vitis*, instantly warm voice which, along with Tracanna's saxophone, forms a nucleus of elegance and tact.

James Willey *String Quartets 1, 2 & 3* CRI 816 CD

Willey is the epitome of the American academic composer, comfortable with convention, accomplished yet content to polish a well-polished furrow. His first string quartet was completed in 1975, the second in 1979, the sixth in 1989. None will shake the earth, but together they display stylistic sophistication and a facility with the form. Performance by *The Esterhazy Quartet* has suitable finesse.

Mathias Ziegler *Ukai* New Music For Flute New Music For Flute CD
Ziegler's principal flute work with Zurich Chamber Orchestra *On Us* takes the instrument into uncharted terrain in a series of collaborations with innovative flute makers. Their innovations, including electroacoustic enhancement, enable him, unaccompanied, to achieve polyphony completely. The results intrigue not merely because the quarter tone flute or contrabass flute are distinctive in appearance and sound, but because Ziegler's strong compositions transcend novelty. □

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in brief critical beats

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

Chic *Live At The Budokan*
summary: cool music waxes so rock on
A belated shout to the live record which
might just feature the most inappropriate
title ever. It's certainly not vintage Chic, but
this is nonetheless a fitting tribute to the
great Bernard Edwards. Recorded in April
1996 on the night Edwards died, *Live At
The Budokan* features Edwards, Nile
Rodgers and a cast of dozens running
through Chic's greatest hits. "Le Freak," "I
Want Your Love," "Good Times," etc. Sister
Sledge make an appearance (and forget
the words to "We Are Family"), as does, er,
Slash from Guns 'N' Roses and Steve
Woodward (on Hendrix's "Stone Free").
Drummer Omar Hakim is no replacement
for Tony Thompson, but when Nile and
Nard let loose all is forgiven. The highlight
for any Chic fanfest is the 14 minute (R)
version of "The Chase" in which the
original's fake crowd noise becomes flesh

Kit Clayton *Neck Purple* EP
SCAR SCAR 001 12"
The first release for Stefan Bettke's new label
follows the blueprint of Polo's CD2 rather
than CD1. Like Bettke's second album, *Neck
Purple* is full of explicit references to
Augustus Pablo's melodic, Robbie
Shaw's basslines and King Tubey's
drop-out. But whereas Bettke tried to
refashion his unique soundworld in their
images on CD2, Kit Clayton lets their alter-
egoes float in the perennials of his
American garage electronic. Using the same
trick as Bettke and the Berlin Cham Reaction
school (disch charge lines, textured beats
and immersive production), Clayton creates
music so evocative of the space and
stringiness of the desert that it should be
used in Wim Wenders's next road movie

G-Force & Seiji *Just Another
Number* new records porno comp 12"
I'm not sure that listening to a 52 minute
Gene Krupa drum solo is anyone's idea of
fun, but that's just what this album from
Reinforced features G-Force & Seiji is like,
more or less. There's some synth wallpaper
for sure, but it's the drums, threatening to
go out of time, that make this an interesting
excursion through the remnants of the
drum 'n' bass scene

The Highlife Movement
Estuary disc 01 CLASSICMUSIC RE RECORDS
MPC0002 CD
With its sample of Howard Zinn, lecturing
about the dominant worldview replaying
itself in historical writing, and verses from

Bay Area MC's lifted from college radio
freebies, the sounds like the work of a
student at Cal-Berkeley. However, the loops
of muzzlers, howlers, bells, others, drums
and strings lend these collars a demo's hazy,
wistful, slightly surreal feel that elevates
Estuary above mundanity

Joe Budha *Presents
Supernatural* Joe Budha
Presents Supernatural new records
MPC001 12"
Supernatural, the master of the freestyle,
makes the transition to the studio with ease
like an old school British landowner.
Supernat doesn't say very much, but he
says it very well. Similarly, Nottingham
producer Joe Budha doesn't do anything
terribly original, but everything on point
and bounces and shudders in the right
places. It just needs a bit of charisma to
take it over the top

Mike Ladd *Live From Paris* new
style SCAR 001 12"
Hip-hop wordsinger Mike Ladd doesn't
quite come off as well live as he does in the
studio, but this is still a vital document of
underground HipHop mutation. Ladd's flow
(similar to that of Company Flow's El-P) is
slightly constrained here, run slightly ragged
by the instrumentation, but his wordplay
(also similar to El-P) isn't harmed one bit
and he's still "as good as Don Quixote
smoking peyote." Meeting up for the lack of
polish, Ladd and his group get seriously
risky on tracks like "It's That Ducky"
("Ducky" and "I Seen When You Said")
Star of the show might be ex-plumber
Bruce Grant who creates claustrophobic
50s sci-fi atmospheres out of eight
Walkmans hooked up to a mixing desk.

Kaman Leung *Stuffing Shapes*
EP new disc 5012 12"
Crawling out of some suburban hole, this
Chinese-Swedish American producer sees
the term "TingPong" in some music rack, takes
it at face value and comes to that conclusion
the genre is his own. There are no beats, Hayes
strings or Lalo Schimmo piano loops here, just
bouts and loops and static and quavery FX
stretched together like lego puttying up those
boats in Frankenstein's neck.

Los Chicharrones *Conga
Heaven, Bongo Hell* new disc
TUG007 CD
After two decades of "It's Just Begin" and
"Trogodyne" samples, someone has finally
picked up the Jimmy Carter groove and run

with it. Los Chicharrones are Dore Morton
Variano and Dominican New Yorker Ramon
Santana. The latter's roots ensure their pen-
ultimate HouseReg Beat stew never congeals
into that cool-Brazilian ome so beloved of
dance music's tastemakers. Instead, Conga
Heaven, Bongo Hell is as funny as salt cod
and combined. Even when they get political
the rigorous becoming is backed by a
manicured organ and wall-to-wall bossaio
jazzrock

Metamatics *Neo Outaja* new disc
DUSTBOX DUSTBOX 001 12"
OK, so the music's not as cool as the
skewy graphics (Socoo! Realist
renderings of the Beang Orga), but it
nonetheless finds a happy midpoint
between the cliche, fan-sound percussion
of Techno smart aleks and the cuddly
blankets of synth warmth so beloved of
Techno purists. Producer Lee Anthony
Norms doesn't bother communicating much,
but as the sound of a guy playing connect
the dots on Cubase it's not bad

Obatake Beats *Obatake Beats*
GOMMA GOMMA 12"
Leroy Hanghofer *Play88821*
GOMMA GOMMA 12"
It's hard to know what to make of these
bozzie beat cut-ups that rattle forward
monotone but never go anywhere. The Obatake
Beats EP is a collection of Hanghofer, Home,
Electro and Techno percussions that's been
put through Oliver North's document
shredder and been reassembled according
to no known template. The Leroy Hanghofer
12", meanwhile, sports a bassline similar to
Michael Jackson's "Smooth Criminal" and
moves along more recognizable routes.

Quasimoto *Strophen* new disc 5012 12"
Quasimoto may change anyone's mind
about the Bay Area not having the
strongest lyrics in the world, but this EP is
so smooth you won't notice any delinquency
in his metaphors or care about his thin,
nasal delivery. The three tracks here slip
and slide like Barry White covered in
essential oils and feature production as laid
back as a Giallomatic adjustable bed

Req *Dual Beats Volume Two*
SIENT SIENT 12"
Finally! Hip-hop release Req has an
amazing grasp of what New York sounds
like. "Soul Purr" is a dense collage of
soundbites, synth congestion and stuttering,
whispering backbeats that is a perfectural
portrait of the entrance to the Holland
Tunnel at mid hour. "J.R." is reminiscent of
walking down unit tenement hallway
listening to the cello scurry in front of you,
while "What's Real" is all in trying to watch
Once Upon A Time in the Zone on a TV
without cable in Manhattan. □

in brief electronica

Reviewed by David Howell

Christopher De Babalon Rise
*Above: This (zine) zshuom 1**
 Christopher De Babalon, DHR's finest, returns with a one-off single on the newly formed Prowd/Obade offshoot Zink. Four diverse tracks reiterate his position as a producer of serious integrity. "Another Language" is a shredded piece of militant breakfast swathed in layers of distressed atmospheres. "Interview" sounds like a chopped up Cream/Haircut 101 piece. "Extreme Joy" is a long, slow, dissolved slice of ambient electronics, and the scuzzy "Endpoint (Reach Out)" offers a brief, fierce assault on the senses. As the sleeve suggests, this is a crucial

Vladislav Delay Huone (OWN)
 REACTION 05015 12"
 The Chan Reaction label is currently in the throes of a strange second blooming, fresh input enabling a healthy push into new territories. Following on from recent advances by Fluxion and Hologrator, Finland's Vladislav Delay turns in a staggering debut release. Running to a restless 24 minutes, "Huone" works out a scuttling, percussive tapestry that slides all over the place. Little ticks and popping House rhythms span across one another's orbits, moving out and away from the listener, shifting shape and revealing fresh synopses. On the flip, "Naam" emerges from a backdrop of crumbling, ambient wash-noise, slowing the pace to a half-speed slink of trust-pubes, twirling percussion and a flickering, foggy glow. "Vite" sounds like it is constructed from old machine clanks looped up in cyclical, locked groove acrobatics, bopping and folding over one another to offer multiple points of focus.

Fizzatron Phitox Of Flux City Centre
 OFFICES BLOODED 12"
 The clamor to write the ultimate Autotech track continues. The first release for Russian producers Fizzatron, this release offers two beautifully crafted, fragile pieces of electronics. Densely layered and noddled with activity, while maintaining an easy momentum, both tracks are framed with slow smog sweeps and melancholic melodies. The title cut is founded on a twisted, tightly programmed chime of snare, crackle and pop, while the void-dense and thud-pulses of "Viva Placem" are reminiscent of Gersmeyer's suburban classic "Bronchus".

Hecker [OT] Xachyzy Breakpoint
 (or 04080) CD
Evil Principio 1650 resource 10
 Where is this non-place? These two perplexing discs of digital audio fold back the

evil-fall unease of isolationism to a micro level in the computer environment. Tiny sounds of data-crunching, internal mechanisms and parts clicking open blow us into alien landscapes. CD-1 in DHR's "made to order" series of CD-R releases sees Florian Hecker piece together a radical, barren aesthetic through the PC and synthesis software. Recorded so quietly that at times it's barely audible, the album demands absolute, undivided attention. Your ears soon adjust to the strangeness, focusing in on a wealth of minuscule detail as the soundworld around you expands. Text and well-contained, seven untitled tracks pivot around the axis of a 24 minute fourth track. Ultra-fast drones are overlaid by choppy strings of zeroes and ones and murching insect noises. Fizzbrates flare up over high-paced squalls.

The "Evil 3" CD of the work of two Spanish producers (like Hecker, Evil's tracks gravitate toward the end of volume rarely explored by extremists. 18 (incl. stop-start clips of clicks, buzzes and cracks are littered with passages of "silence". Track markings appear random or nonsensical, as the contents flow on to their own inevitable logic. Like the aftermath of an AMH pop, you know these works with ears recalibrated, wide awake and hypersensitive to the soundworld around you.

Kid 606 GQ On The EQ 555
 RECOVERIES 05015 12"
 A rising star in the burgeoning US scene of gritty digital deconstruction (see also Linauxculpt, LSR, Richard Dawkins, Matmos, etc.) Kid 606 enters back from his earlier Hardcore outings to deliver a brilliantly executed and tightly compiled six track EP on Leeds label 555. Instead of violently assaulting the listener with a barrage of twisted laptop noise, the overall mode of GQ evokes a rich and intoxicating ambience, drawing you into a series of swirling, sizzling structures. "I Am Leo, Hear Me Rise" breaks out in an edgy, raw field of resistant timbre bending and digital scouse. "Dug" pits hard, distorted breaks across a stop-start mesh-up that manages to sound simultaneously explosive and immense, sucking you in as the scorchy clankings around you (if erratic euro-rhythms and grinding, stretched out sonics are your thing, Kid 606 is for you).

David Kristian Woodworking
 Cindewindwood REMIXES ALBUM
 ALUMCDS 12 CD
 An impressive 13 track remix compilation,

Woodworking sees a host of underground electronic luminaries (including Gorn, Behrberg & Bauer, Phoenix, Rube and Kid 606) get to grips with Canadian David Kristian's originals, snapping them apart and reconfiguring the shards into a diverse range of new constructions. Audie, Farmers Manual and Rehberg & Bauer excel amidst a high quota of cold, abstract ambience. Phoenix sculpt some near dense noise over their trademark fracture-funk. Solvent and Lowfish (both operating out of Toronto's Suction Records stable) bring the heat, while Godlieh/Techno Animal's Justin K Broadrick confounds expectations to home in on the spanan dynamics of the toned one. Excellent stuff. (Jon Pannam)

Kut-Up Kaos Kick/Ultraflash
 Don't Lie Wtato Boy Home 05015
 RECOVERIES 05015 12"
 Kickstarted with a manifesto printed in underground zine Detoxico, Home Wrecker Foundation is activated as an all-embrace label: set up to total together skills, encourage production and generally kick nuts in the male-dominated world of electronics. Playing from the inside out (a clue?), both tracks here back different, distinctly individual paths through the genre. On "Suspension Station", Kut-Up Kaos Kick (HWF founders Rachel Korak and Sebastian McClackman) weaves vocal clips and wotzy, slip 'n' slide atmospheric around a slow, shimmering bassline, clear, close-up kickdrum, and twisting lines of amazing, controlled guitar feedback. Ultraflash is Caro LSL, whose idea of composing tracks on a GameBoy machine (on a demo sent to Drift) was reportedly approved by Alec Empire on his recent Antarctic Teenage Robots CD. "Scavenger Gelf" anguishes a barely audible texture-wave and simple GameBoy melody, disintegrating and dissolving them beneath swathes and slashes of hiss, dirt and drone to create a big, black bleeding void of desire.

Markant 21 MARKANT 201 12V2
Markant 22 MARKANT 202 12"
 Munich resident Carsten Endras (aka Markant) continues to pour out a prolific stream of material. Released with serial precision (Markants 1-22) and stark, minimal packaging, Endras continues to work his own identity into his dynamic, prodigious electronics. In spite of a certain patchiness, the nine tracks of 21 are probably the best introduction for newcomers. As usual, the best tracks on both releases take the body, hooking you into drum atmospheres formed from clicks, clanks and rumbles, blotkies of fuzz and hiss, and glassy, roiling melodies. Events occur in extended time, as rhythms, melodies and textures cohere and rearrange themselves, with shifts looming into view before cascading overhitting the listener.

Monoale The Deebet EP
 VIKOJAM/AMMART CONCEPT MUSIC 10030 CD
 A real move on from the laight, peripatetic desert of the dazzling interstate album. The Deebet remains immensely tactile, yet loses the hard, jerking body rhythms of its predecessor as it shifts to a mode of extended Ambient dispersal. At times dropping away to reveal a Man-like interludes, the dense, crisp, bristling foliage of clicks, bumps, drops, gaseous enmeshes and twitching mastic chitter creates an expansive, deep listening space of swirling texture-rhythms. Running at just over 35 minutes, the EP is structured in such a way that its gradual shifts in weight and motion are subtle, barely perceptible — as though mirroring the cooling down of desert temperatures, or the ever-changing patterns generated through constantly shifting sand.

Nena Formed Versio MULE PLATEAU 05015 CD
 Hot on the heels of excellent recent forays into error-ambience from both Dyal and Nukakusa Takamura, Nena (aka Hosoya Sakura) opens out another fine mess on the consistently excellent Mule Plateau label. Gorgeously detailed, the music leads the ear through a lattice of layered sound (a track drone, part loop, part beating, micro-popping activity), eliciting out a series of shimmering, surreal deliriums. Blatantly lost in the mix, each track becomes a fresh path in the maze. Slowly modulating tone, bloated crackle and fuzz, delirious digital signals, blurring electronics and stutter-noise are used. Patterns, rhythms and melodies gradually emerge through the fog as tracks grow and decay through a process of audio camouflages. Each track finds its own unique aura — there's no fixed blueprint to work from, simply a play on the dark and the malleable possibilities of sound. While the majority of tracks work through smooth, ambient gaseous transitions, others like "Hole", "Thinker" and "Spell-bound" sound more hacked-up and crumbling, with edgy jerk-loops, ear-dart blizzards and a more specific sense of structure. "Polyhedron" drips a beautiful Agha-style melody over chattering rhythmic tracks. The album's length may test your endurance, but it has just the right quality stuff.

Torre Thaelmütz A-Musik
 Presses/A Program Of A-Musik
 A-MUSIK 414 12"
 If Musik Caro had inscribed the noise of labour into their shoofar capital-accounting soundtracks, they might have ended up with a sound like this. Thaelmütz's angry red vinyl discs a cheer into two gently looping candy-worms. EZ Listening phrases, shock-winding the tape and letting off lather-hum like a berserker in the General Motors DJ booth. Should appeal to anyone for whom 1001! Straps, unreleased, is as unsatisfactory as kissing a man without a mustache. (Rob Young) □

in brief global

Reviewed by Clive Ball

Bloque Bloque (UKA) TOP 0362 7000 CD
Bloque, I imagine, used to come across as a puny Colombian rock outfit who've settled into their Talking Heads albums. The opening track sounds like a homage to David Byrne's even older "Dance in the Bedroom". The guitar riff is suitably burgeoning and the production up to date. But the album never quite rises above rock mediocrity — not helped by fatboy posturing and a guitarist who can't stop fiddling with his effects unit. Plus too much "Bibes" — can't live with 'em, can't live without 'em! Sentiment in the lyrics. Byrne's Luaka Bop label must think there's something musically tougher buried here, but for now it's below the surface.

Joji Kirota The Gate (UK) WOLFGANG CD
Japanese percussionist Hiroto came to Britain with Stormy Tamashita's Red Buddha group more than 20 years ago and he has lived in England ever since. Indeed, he is now a member of the WOMAD and Real World scene. Together with Chinese flautist Guo Yue and ex-Camel member Phil Bristan he has performed New Agey ethno-synth workouts in the trio Hiroto. Hiroto is an exciting live performer who can work up a ferocious head of steam on the Japanese taiko drum, but here he goes to show what a bag of tricks he is underneath, playing wistful shakuhachi flute over a luscious string quintet, and singing a lullaby in dust with eight year old Emi Mon.

Kandia Kouyate Kita Kan (UK) AFRIKA 050100 CD
From the Mandinka musical tradition, but being up to date, comes the first international release from Malian superstar Kandia Kouyate. "One of the world's greatest vocalists," gushes the sleeve note, and tales

of patrons showering Kouyate with gifts of cars and private jets. So are we in the presence of Patsy's answer to Celine Dion? Kouyate clearly has a great voice, but the sounds rather lonely belting out the praise songs accompanied by the musical equivalent of an air conditioned Holiday Inn. The pleading strings and wailing B0s synth and horn riffs would not really pass muster for a Human League tribute group, and the album only occasionally sparks into life, notably on the duet with Sekouba Bambino.

Njava Votse (UK) HENRIKSEN 724349696323 CD
At first I dismissed Njava as the blandest-out sound of DMJ jumping onto the World Music bandwagon, but I have ended up seduced by the delicacy and skill of this five piece Madagascan group. Three brothers and two sisters, originally from a family of 15 children, Njava have lived in Brussels for most of the last decade. The album has a lightly produced acoustic sound — cascades of layered guitars and featherlight percussion supported by the beautifully agile female voices. There are echoes of much traditional Malagasy music, but this is a group with an sophisticated agenda. In the end the remarkable singing of Monika Rosanina gives the songs emotional depth and weight. Glossy, but a bit of a disc.

Ulla Dams H04-CD 9935 CD
Ulla are a Norwegian instrumental trio exploring string arrangements of traditional material. They use the local Hardanger fiddle, ram's horns, tenor sax and a turntable of percussion. Instead of Garbriel-like wide open spaces, Ulla create a dense, almost martial feel — dance music for medieval armies of fighting monks, perhaps. The resonating cycles of fiddle rhythms rest

on deep booming drums and rattling bonfires of percussion. The ornamented drones and belfries of the sax contribute a more introverted side, contrasting with the most vociferous jaw's harp I've ever heard. What's that feedback doing on a folk record? Very strange.

Various Artists Bali Collection Volume 1: The Kecek (UK) NUSAWA 955212 CD
The Kecek, with its roots in trance dancing, was developed in Bali in the 1930s — in response to a request from a Western film crew. I read somewhere it has to be one of the most stunning dance dramas in the world. The Ramayana story is told by a large male chorus, whose vocal acrobatics and interlocking chant patterns require much disciplined rehearsal. There is no gamelan orchestra — instead the vocals reproduce the rapid percussive textures normally hammered out on metallophones. For the climactic battlescene, the wailing chorus flutters their arms to create an eerie impression of an army of monkeys. Containing the most complete Kecek I have heard on record, the CD documents a fine performance from 1998, with strong solo voices well recorded in close-up. One impressionistic ballad in particular has clearly been studying the distorted vocal techniques of British improviser Phil Minton. The chorus is tight and clear, with that great Balinese combination of slapdash and high seriousness also found in their puppet dramas. Information is minimal, however, and there's no background essay on the sleeve.

Various Artists Ethiopeque 6: Tigirma Music 1970-1978 (UK) MUSIC BIRD 0495 CD
Guzneti Tewelde Reddo is pictured with his group on the cover, sitting on a big old radio gramophone which seems to be his amplifier. His direct guitar style and singing has a casual rock 'n' roll brilliance that many contemporary pop musicians would surely lack. For the singles collected here were recorded in Ethiopia in the 70s and 80s, from

Emrota, is only one of the many delights. A sex year blossoming of Ethiopian popular music was captured by the local Amha label, and now a torrent of CDs curated by Francis Fiketo and released by the Busha Musique label is drawing much wonderful music out into the light of day. The 15th volume in the series concentrates on the Tigry and Emrota songs, and also features top solo singers from vocalist Tebeleh "Boris Day" Hadda-Hunegn, who would not sound out of place fronting a 90s indie group.

Various Artists Gueles: Musico Of The Masandra (UK) OMAR HOUSE 0492741112 CD
Bid farewell to the modern world with these extraordinary field recordings made in West Africa in 1952 by Gilbert Rouget. Music of court and village, and songs of hunting and circumcision are played by musicians as yet untouched by any European influence. The balafon (lylophone) playing is beautiful, and there are many varieties of kora harp, some with very fine tunings, plus water drums (gourd floating upside down in larger gourd) and much full-on exuberant singing, both solo and in chorus. The accompanying tape booklet has fine photographs, and vast quantities of information on tuning, lyrics, etc. most of it in French.

Various Artists Tibet Sacred Voice (UK) HANSON 1199901 CD
A very interesting collection of Tibetan chants from four different monasteries in exile in southern India. The monks of Tshe (Lhasa) were in London this summer on a fundraising tour, performing lively sacred dances while disguised as cows and demons. The Gyurme Tarnic College created an extremely dark texture with 11 subterranean male voices, and dramatically free things apart with clashing cymbals and wailing horns. The third group, from Drepung, have the advantage of a Chant Master with a rich and powerful solo voice, and as they chant they keep raising the pitch by tiny amounts, to disorienting effect. There's also a fine track of 11 rhythmic monks trading clashing harmonies. □



These 1998 performances are part of a continuing process of growth which has gone on over at least ten years, and probably much longer. At least, the use of elements of jazz along with elements of contemporary classical music in a close and shifting relationship seems to have results unlike anything being attempted elsewhere. In fact there is a double integration here, between aspects of contemporary classical music and jazz, and between the players taking part.



Maybe it helps to know that Men and Ellery are both good chess players. Bannick favors an offensive game to be sure, but Ellery is conspicuously unimpaired, knowing that with Bannick's switched metaphor ahead the idea is not to enter the bull but to keep from being thrown. And Han, so he submits pleasure, discovers a new, fully articulated fear he can't scare off, wear out, bury or give the slip.



Here we have an act of transformation, or several. All art, of course, entails and entails the process — a perpetual dance of cognition, change, and recognition. ... The surprising pieces have not changed over time but, as listeners, we certainly have, as has Steve Lacy, and as while what we hear may be the same the way we hear it is dramatically different. ... Once a Prospectus, now an ironic look at Clashes, but didied? Anything but.

in brief jazz

Reviewed by Richard Cook

Fred Anderson Quartet

Volume One JAZZ ADVANCE CD
Never much liked or elevated, Anderson would be a lost soul in Chicago music if he didn't cheerfully and generously keep playing his trade on horn turf, which he never seems to have left much. This one was out at the Velvet Lounge base "during the 1998 season," which for him must be like the briefest of schedules. He still blows post-Coltrane tenor that feeds back—into the soul-jazz tradition—rather than forward, and when he settles into a groove with gags he likes to work with you often wonder if there's a better way to play the horn. Followed by Bill Brimfield does squatty trumpet, solid Tatsu Aoki is on bass and Chad Taylor does the drums. Four long tracks, but it's never boring.

Taylor Ho Bynum & Eric

Rosenthal And Only Life My
Leash LUMINOUS SACRED CD
Starting from numerous touchstones—"Lush Life," "My Favorite Things," "Hood Inigo"—trumpeter Bynum and drummer Rosenthal create short, intense improvisations that sometimes barely rattle the skeleton of the tune. "SoBo" is everything but, and "Naima" is a moaning wail. Recorded in sharp close-up, it's sometimes brittle but mostly very inventive and unchained playing from Boston, Mass.

Marc Cary The Ardite

MAKESQUE ARTIST CD
Luminous without being Latin jazz, heated without getting too heated, Cary's excellent set of original mixes, a profitable sense—post-bop head music coloured rather than cluttered by the Afro-Cuban tiger his own piano work deftly fits in the harmonic substance, and Ron Blake does handsome work on soprano, alto and tenor alike.

Eugene Chadbourne Beauty

And The Bloodcracker JAZZ ADVANCE CD
I've enjoyed many of Dr Chadbourne's releases over the years and I love the opening piece here, "Nymphalad," probably because his sparring with woman Ekely Eskelin reminded me of my love of all Eugene's albums. Don't Run! Get with the great Frank Lowe. Besides, there's help from all sorts of pals, and Dr C goes across boundaries with his usual devil-may-care attitude, but frankly I'm a bit tired of seeing blarney that hail music which rings "from top to Western to Heavy Metal." I mean, so what? Nor do I like "distortions on

some tracks, are there for a purpose? No, they are there because somebody did a sloppy job. It's good music—let's hear it properly. Dr Virus Veldgeit is credited with additional CD/unbearable tracks, but wasn't he Bela Lugosi in the Overbuds CD?

Misha Feigin Both Kinds Of

Mizmo JAZZ LAB CD
The type of album that MP3-ers will soon be downloading at their own whim: a homemade patchwork of tracks—duos with Elliot Sharp, Eugene Chadbourne, Davey Williams, LaDonna Smith and Craig Hulgren—each with balalaika/classical guitar. Feigin recorded at home, at gigs, etc. Wanna hear what I can do? Go on, sample my stuff! And maybe I can do—some albums, as this one has to be, will simply pass away. While we're waiting for that to happen, Mizmo offers these very likable bits and pieces: duos, strumming, twanging, and generally (especially on balalaika, which was made for exiles) tickling each note twice as much as he has to.

Glen Hall Halmucrona

LOUTIN CD
A sonnet montage inspired by two William Burroughs novels. Hall plays reads, adds FX, samples and processing, reads some baleful passages of his own and enlists guitars, oud, vibes and trombone. Roswell Rudd to help out. Though recorded in Toronto, the mood is vaguely Middle Eastern and nomadic—music without pitching camp anywhere. definite. It also obscures enough to suffer, rather than benefit from, its episodic nature. But there are some amazing moments, and Rudd sounds fine.

Hear Or What? Jemima

COLORED CD
This one should have been released by Lovely Music. Joy O (vibes, percussion) and Hannes Giger (bass) get all radical and far-out at times, but what they like to do is best summed up by track one, "Baked In A Minn," as sweet a miniature as you'll hear from two such players. There are 47 tracks covering 63 minutes and plenty of them are a single idea with the explicit: what do you think of this, behind it. Do somebody say New Age postmodern?

Jeff Kaiser Gazez Andazie

JEMIMA CD
I ECH'd got some of the way of its more older 70s projects it might have been making records like this today. Kaiser plays trumpet and electronics, and he has got great multi-musical Vinny Gola adding everything from

tenor sax to Chinese membrane flute on five tracks, but the playing is less important than the sense of sound organisation in its digital space. Kaiser gets some very strange results out of his electronics and you really don't know what to expect next as the record unfolds. That said, it's hard to piece together the sense of this as a single entity.

Tin O'Dwyer Solo Sax Show

VOLUME 1 WASTED CD
Sole, but heavily informed by multiphonics, and processing too—so what we hear is, in the alarming error "Worries En Stronker", a madhouse of whispering and mumbling, subsiding into bare bass dinner figures, then muting again—and so on. O'Dwyer has studied with Evan Parker, so no shock to find many Parkeresque touches in the "natural" solo, and he has an assertive command of the horns it's harsh to call it minimalist, but no visionary glimmers here yet.

Robert Reigle The Marriage Of

Heaven And Earth ACOUSTIC LUMINOUS CD
The porous title unfortunately seems to suit the music, which is a peculiar mix of tracks—solo sax (one dating back to 1982) and melody overused groups, recorded live. There's a chaotic treatment of Albert Ayler's "Bells," very poorly recorded, and the title track appears in two wildly different versions, neither especially rewarding. Pass.

Schroder/Waldorff/

Jennsen Freedom Of Speech
THE OVERSEAS CD
With its now frequent patronage of Americans, and new and improved improv, fans of the old clear die of PMP might have felt the recent output a bit looking in the red meat and going intensity that used to signify its vinyl era. So here's a doorway! Into the grand manner, sax, guitar, drums, with titles like "Jazz Killed bass" and "Freedom." Nothing much new, but a good cold bath of the hard stuff.

Roger Smith Extended Plays

EMMETH CD
Whatever else you say about Emmeth, they sure give value for money: there are 78 minutes here. After the various guitars mentioned above, Smith is like a glass of herbal tea. I don't find him classically quiet, as the sleeveless suggest, but he never rattles the windows either, and his basic style—a kind of dislocated flamenco—hardly evokes much but brutal and perverse! which have been used to describe him in the past. Where John Russell, maybe his closest companion, is frenetically unresistant, Smith proposes an alternative gentility. He likes the sweetness of nylon strings and wooden bodies, and he sees no need to demonstrate that, even when proposing long stretches of music which are as

uncompromised and abstruse. In their way, as the fiercest music of Bailey and Chadbourne. A very fine disc.

Mike Stern Play Atlantic

802119 CD
What's a sound, honest music to do after seven solid, honest but unmemorable albums? Stern gets a certain amount of stick for being too much like Mike G, which is a bit of a rumour for someone who was once killed as the bad man in the Miles Davis group. He's none here, again, this time in the company of other guitarists, which is the sort of thing that always seems to happen at this point—double him up with John Scofield and Bill Frisell and you've got an all-star record. Stern's task for coming up with pretty tunes hasn't deserted him, though, and in the end I found myself enjoying this more than the latest releases by (who else?) Scofield and Frisell. "Blue Tone" and "Small World" are the kind of charms that ought to get played on the radio, even if taken.

Tea Toot All Right

WORLD CD
Tea Toot All Right by Tom Brown, Selin Hassan, Matthew Heyner and Daniel Carter (mostly saxes, bass, drums), all honour roll members of New York's revitalised eclectic jazz community. They all continue to "bark" on the city's mean streets, but this was recorded at AUM Fidelity HQ in Brooklyn Power-packed, but not explosive in nature, they often show a nice sense of restraint to go with the propulsion. The longest piece, "huhuhuh" (late sounds on SH), is a beautifully modulated nocturne. Heyner's bass disappears at times but the mix is attractively black and white.

World Saxophone Quartet

MBB JUSTIN THE JUSTICE CD
They're long since stopped being just a saxophone quartet, which is in many ways their most disappointing aspect. ROVA could do it, why not they? But maybe it's never really been the same since Julius Hemphill departed. John Purcell fits in, but he's not Julius—how could he be? David Murray's priorities are elsewhere. Harriet Bluest has his baritone ensemble thing going, and Oliver Lake, in some ways the most radical spirit, can't seem to decide which of his angels to wrestle with. This is a big soft project which belongs mostly to Murray, arising out of a commission to join The WSQ with four marching bands and do something that has a kind of pan-African feel, even though it is primarily dedicated to John Dwyer and the Blue Notes. It might be awesome in its live presentation, but as a record it has as much confusion and ambivalence as it does openness about it. The seven other sound like they're struggling against the drummers and singers in the end, the posse finally don't add up to very much. So we go on waiting for the great WSQ record. □

charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

Misanthropy 15

Flaryanne Amacher Sound Characters (Track!)
Peter Thomas Orchestra Warp Back To Earth (Banglow)
Various End Of (Digital Narcosis)
Horse With Wound An Awkward Pause (United Dairies)
Sensoryband Sensoryband (CD-R)
Dion McGregor Dreams Again (Zoidid)
Volcano The Bear Yak Folk Yare (Picked Egg)
irr. Applect An Uncertain Animal, Ruptured (Five Inc)
Terry Riley Olson 3 (Open Of Cont)
Various Labyrinth & Myths (Harson)
Kalle Northover CD Circle (Aurelio World)
Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band Anthropology (DJXC)
Clear Light H' Bui (Electro)
AMN/Herbore Far Us/Tower Of Ghosts (Fat Cat)
The Sons Of God The Object (Prowork)
 Compiled by Greg Hillard and David Morikoff, Plainfield NJ, USA
 CMAPR 5 PM Windsor, Ontario, Canada
 Senders: misanthropy2000, Email: misanthropy2000

WXYC 15

Os Mutantes Everything Is Possible: The Best Of (Luaka Bop)
Iggy Swards Iggy Swards (Comunism)
DJ Format English Lesson 12" (Boris Hip-Hop)
Various How Are You Servant Girls
Women Baum Stepping 1925-1969 (JMC)
Zohm Quong The Future Is Numbers (Oxide)
Los Zofros Bossa Cubana (World Circuit/Nonesuch)
Big Joe Williams & Friends
 Going Back To Crayford (Unreel)
Guitar Wolf Jet Generation (Prodor)
Ibrahim Ferrer Buenos Viaz Social Club Presents (World Circuit/Nonesuch)
Lee Konitz with Wayne Marsh Inside H.F. (Planet)
Lung Ling Hied To Mine (Southern)
Plasida Live In Jerusalem 1994 (Zoidid)
Douane Get Sunlight (LookOut)
Joe Harriott Double Quintet Joe Harriott Quintet
Vandermark 5 Simpatico (Arista)
 Compiled by Mark Kurl, NYC 001 771, Queens NY
 Hugo Jennings Ltd, Website: reggiejenns.org

Non Mi Place 15

Various Le Jazz Non (Corpus Immortel)
Braps Mahogany (Gila Bico)
Solomon D.O. (Arista)
Other Turner & The Rising Star Fife And Drum Band
 Everybody Hooter Goat (Bedroom)
Crawling With Tarts In Their Sleep They Are Free

(PowerTech Industries)
KG The Tatars (Cass Unreel)
Lower Lower (Endurance Machine Music)
The Necks Music For The Feature Film The Boys (Wild Sound)
Ethnic Heritage Ensemble Tyine Gardeners Poles Chicago (Moers Music)

Rum Weibow Swing Low (Russek, TruicOTAR)
Starhuckers Induramus (Drunken Fish)
Circle X Calcutta (Parador)
Gale The Lawverend Lord (Hell's Half Halo)
Steve Beresford The Bath Of Surprise (Piano)
Laurels 90-95 Songs From Singles, EPs And Compilations (Dot Dot Dots)
 Compiled by Sebastian Borge, Non Mi Place, NJ, Canada
 40700-F, Shanghai, China, Tel: 00 86 1 894 405 51, e-mail: 8940551@china.com

BIA 15

The Motorist Shrink (Big Snake/Vogin)
Tokyo Combo Uh Yeah (Apost)
The Quinist Live In Concert (BP)
The Cinematic Orchestra Motion (Naga Tunes)
Kreyt Love (BP)
Platons Quasi-Objects (Masador)
Frode Gjerstad ISM (Circumlocution)
John Butcher/Phil Durrant Secret Measures (Wobly Rail)
Isla Ballany Food (Fate)
Godspeed You Black Emperor! Slow Rest For New Zero, Canada (Consolation/Kranz)
Gush Live In Tempe (Dragon)
Wham Psychotic Wanderlust (Ueater)
Electro Nova Electro Nova (Surrealism Supersound)
Blaisy & The Jazz Synthesizer Break EP (Big Hips)
Reggie Redmond Surreal Match Books (Rapha)
 Compiled by Peter Richman, Montreal, Canada
 Website: www.bia15.com

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Polyweebill 2 (VineNOWart)
Atop Best 9th Spring (Rune Grawenhof)
Nezz Pop Heaven & (Vogel)
Carl Stone Fusion (New Tone)
Adam Alkawi Music And Words (Paradigm Decs)
Lily 2nd Production (Lured Dada)
Blue Cheer Hello Tokyo, Bye Bye Osaka (Golden Trip)
Kat Cayton Reception And Nonance (Drop Bear)
 Compiled by: The Office Ambience Society

Solox

the compiler

New compilations: reviewed, rated, reviled

Norwegian electronic music comes into its own on the superlative Rune Grammofon label's **Love Comes Over The Mountains** (RCD2012 CD). A mixture of live electroacoustics (Alog, Suspetant, Borgha/Rainuov, and a live ensemble from a [Borgha/Devilworld show in 1998]) and straight-to-tape digital explorations (A Threatened Logical Unit, Information Phonograph, Pinks) the diverse selection reflects Norway's long hours of daylight more than its extended winter nights (despite the midnight blue sleeves). Highlights include Monolight (aka label boss Rune Krosshaugen, formerly of BO-populars Røa Lopo) laid in a meditative, post-Monty Subotnick soundscape of blurred blocks, and Sidses's extraordinary group workout, which shifts the frame between studio space and digital eruptions.

If Kim Hartley's sleeve art makes Rune Grammofon feels memorable, Jan Fors's design has become de rigueur on London's underground club and label circuit. His jewel case for **Omniel** (LWF BAY10 CD) opens out to reveal floor-baiting on the booklet's back cover reflected in the silvered CD itself. The act of observation changes the object invisibly," it reads. Whether the music collected here is an appropriate analogue to automotive theory is a moot point, but there's nevertheless a strong innovative contingent: Four Tet, Salsmyn, Yukata, Richard Thomas and Grasper all pursue internal narratives without the tenseness associated with academic process music. The *Sons Of Silence's* jauntness is a bit grating, but the *Last Family* track is distinguished by the way its artist attempt to progress through each track and end up on unfamiliar turf. Special prize is reserved for Eardrum's conflated Q'ang African Hand Change drum mutations.

Preps Are (Vikram 3051332 4XCD) is well named — has there ever been a bigger or more comprehensive collection of Algerian dance music than this four disc, 100 track package? The pile 'em high, sell 'em cheap tactics work for and against the music. There's no documentation to help the novice join the dots through the music's development from desert-enclosed urban trawls-blues to the myriad Gubse-constructioned versions of today by the likes of Cheb Khaled. Conversely, the lower the studio budget the better the music — like disc's digitalisation, it can't be said that technology has done the music any great favours apart from the lush way synth patchboards have been pressed into the role of traditional instruments (like the saz,

troubad, the New Romantic-style fantasies that now decorate skanks by the likes of Cheb Abdou and Houan Bencherit are given too much space in the mix, denying the music's claustrophobic appeal. But there is no doubting the cumulative effect of the eclectic riae, be it Cheb Mann's or that of the ululating Sonas, that floats off the top of passion-concocted tunes. Are Wajams trying to start an Asian sub-cult? **Spirit Of India: Traditional And New Vibes** (Vikram 3051152 2xCD) includes a Rastaman, Nasrat Fatah Al Khan, as the first track on its 'traditional' disc for maybe it's an attempt to patch up relations between the two horn-banned labels. The CD could have been a single release in its own right, what's interesting, looking at the titles of the second disc's 'New Vibes' collection, are the themes Western versions need into India's ancient dances, raga and temporal mood music. They come in three categories, raga as call-out (Badnamshi's 'Taron In'), Better Dates 'Stay Right Here'), as aural narcotic (Up, Bustle & Out), 'The Hand Of Contraband', Bl' Lawrence's 'Black Lotus', Badnamshi's 'Goo Funk') or as revolutionary statement (Pressure Drunk's 'The Calling', Fun-De-Mentals' 'Tribal revolution'). **Asian Awareness** (Vikram 3051153 2xCD) is a collection of raga as call-out (Badnamshi's 'Taron In'), Better Dates 'Stay Right Here'), as aural narcotic (Up, Bustle & Out), 'The Hand Of Contraband', Bl' Lawrence's 'Black Lotus', Badnamshi's 'Goo Funk') or as revolutionary statement (Pressure Drunk's 'The Calling', Fun-De-Mentals' 'Tribal revolution').

It's a collection of raga as call-out (Badnamshi's 'Taron In'), Better Dates 'Stay Right Here'), as aural narcotic (Up, Bustle & Out), 'The Hand Of Contraband', Bl' Lawrence's 'Black Lotus', Badnamshi's 'Goo Funk') or as revolutionary statement (Pressure Drunk's 'The Calling', Fun-De-Mentals' 'Tribal revolution'). But it's happily taken the whole of 'New Vibes' for the eclectic sound of Unapologetic Sanskrit and Raghuvarshi Mantra on the first disc. Kompakt's Techno soundings often appear as well, fresh as its hard to imagine anyone being able to add anything worthwhile in a new season. That's the daunting task faced by *Sub Rosa* in the second of their label stand-outs: **Sub Rosa V Kompakt** (Sub Rosa SR157 CD). Of the 12 tracks, four are licensed directly from the Cologne label by artists by Thomas Thom, Michael Paye, Jürgen Peape and Dettinger. The rest are generically modified with varying degrees of success by a selection of current electro-syntheticians. Because the originals have already achieved some kind of formal perfection, Audiotek's attempt on Peape's mind-boggling sonic potpourri, 'Trommel', can only turn it into a noodle soup, taking on the same pace. DJ Oleo improvises with some curious percussion instruments and a twanging-rim arrangement that recalls Ennio Morricone. London's Proform shares Kompakt's interest in the elasticity of sound for his component of Michael Paye's '17 Und 4' he invents a new plastic polymer to better the track used it backes. In a strange twist, Scanner closes the set with a baroque piano adaptation to Finland's rustic 'Orange' (1) Reviewed by Rob Young

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New music books read, raved about, roughed up

Les Sculptures Sonores: The Sound Sculptures Of Bernard And François Baschet

By François Baschet

SOUNDWORLD PRG + CD \$14.99

In his overview of sound art (*The Wire* 198), David Toop identifies the sculptures created by Bernard and François Baschet as "artefacts of the space age, all silvered surfaces, steel flowers and translucent marula ray forms." He also remarks that the brothers' acoustic constructions were a reaction against the ascendancy in France of electronic composition following the Second World War. In François Baschet's own words, "Electronic sound is to natural sound what canned peas are to peas picked fresh from the garden." This and other Gallicisms, comprising music making to cuisine or making love, can be found in *Les Sculptures Sonores*, an eccentric and engaging publication which devotes more than 180 pages to the story of those distinctive space-age artefacts.

Trevor Taylor, who has overseen production of the book, became intrigued by the Baschet instruments in 1972, when he heard them used by percussionist Shomu Yamashita on a recording of Toru Takemitsu's *Sessions*. This volume brings together three adroit books

and mixed with a startling variety of people. Edith Piaf is mentioned, so are Min Ray and Malcolm X. Baschet dined with Mark Rothko two days before the painter's suicide. He tells of a collaborative venture with Jean Cocteau in 1959, and he's got the photo to prove it. Indeed, the book is copiously and splendidly illustrated with black and white photographs, which elevate it above the level of entertainment and simple instruction, and make it an invaluable document for anyone interested in the interface of music and the plastic arts. It seems Baschet's good-natured sociability led him into the field of sound sculpture. As a young man he recognised that possession of a guitar, supplemented by knowledge of a few chords, ensured access to some interesting gatherings. He found conventional guitars cumbersome, however, and in 1952 set about inventing an inflatable, collapsible version, manufactured "with a primitive neck and a plastic camping pillow".

From that pragmatic beginning he developed into the sculptor of such exotic hybrids as the *Laughing Harp*, the *Nanny Goat* and the *Musical Typewriter*. François considers himself as a sculptor and his creations as sculptures. Bernard Baschet's passion for contemporary music confirmed their collaborative goal to be sound sculpture, which addressed a performance situation in which 20th-century



The Baschet Brothers. Left: Yvonne Lussy at the glass room

musicians were largely reliant upon anachronistic instrumentation. François regards his brother as "the visionary and the theoretician", casting himself in the role of artisan-inventor. They have left mentorship to others, notably Jacques and Yvonne Lussy and Michel Denieuvé, who have promoted the Baschet instruments through concerts and recordings.

A CD included with this book gives an indicative sample of the range of sounds generated by the sculptures, and of their musical applications. François acknowledges the inspiration he drew from pioneering acousticians such as E.H. Chladni and Henri Bouasse. He reproduces, for the benefit of the uninitiated, Taylor's law for strings, Bernoulli's laws for pipes, and Koeng's chart for vibrating rods. Yet the book says remarkably little about 20th-century music. Baschet characteristically recalls Edgard Varèse as a friend, rather than as a composer. He records a visit to his own workshop in 1964 by John Cage, who "gave the impression of a vulnerable, sensitive, introverted college boy", and "the extroverted", inquisitive David Tudor. This is clearly not a monumental treatise in the manner of Harry Partch's *Genesis Of A Music*. Partch is mentioned, however, in the course of an angry

two, predominantly technical, commissioned in 1980 by a centre for aesthetic research in Vancouver, but never published, and a reflective memoir completed in 1989. Eccentricity arises from their amalgamation, which produces curious juxtapositions of precise descriptions, supported by diagrams, and wide-ranging, sometimes quirky, anecdotal reminiscences: espionage in Peron's Argentina, a meeting with Jacques Brel in exiled Paris, the etymology of 'fado', as expounded by Herodotus, meetings on Spain and its architecture, sociological speculations concerning Japan, deliberations on the nature of happiness and of pleasure — all find their way into François Baschet's meandering text. At times it seems too haphazard, but maybe, as Taylor suggests, that is a necessary part of the picture.

François Baschet has travelled extensively,



rebuttal of critic Dick Wits. During a 1983 BBC radio review of an exhibition of Baschet sound sculptures at London's Barbican Centre, Wits alleged the brothers owed a debt to the Californian musical inventor, which they have failed to acknowledge. In response, Baschet points out that 40,000 people voted the exhibition over four weeks. In the 1960s their work had featured in the magazines *Life* and *New Scientist*, and they also appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

Above all, the brothers took their work to be known and enjoyed. Towards the end, Bernard contributes a brief but accurate account of their sculptures' educational uses, of which they are especially proud.

In the extent of a reprint, the publishers should address the lax proof reading, which has resulted in too many omissions of letters and words. Even so, they deserve praise for coordinating the translations by Mary Helen (Carolanne) Lane and Candice Lyons, the fascinating CD, and the superb collection of illustrations, and for drawing attention once again to the artistry of François and Bernard Baschet.

JULIAN KOWLEY

Widening The Horizon: Exoticism In Postwar Popular Music

Edited by Philip Hayward
JOHN LIBRARY FHX \$17.50

From 1949-51 Korta Pandit presented a massively popular TV programme in the Los Angeles area called *Musical Adventure* (with Korta Pandit: Pandit never spoke, but sat in front of a backdrop of flowing clouds, playing the Hammond organ. He was filmed head on, staring into the camera, dressed in coat, tie and a ruby studded turban. In spite of his success Pandit was mysteriously sacked in 1951. In 1994 he appeared as himself in Tim Burton's film *Ed Wood*, and is currently posing for homage by the tribute group, Korta Pandit.

The homage continues in *Widening The Horizon*, with a thorough essay devoted to Pandit by musicologist Timothy Taylor. Like most of this excellent anthology, the chapter manages to be academically rigorous yet always readable, critically detached yet affectionate about this very odd musical phenomenon. Taylor considers Pandit in context of the growth of the American suburbs in the 1940s, and the West's perception of India as 'otherworldly and mystical, before going on to discuss Pandit's TV show and analyse what exactly makes Pandit's tunes sound 'exotic'. '[W]hat was perhaps most exotic about Pandit was that he was an exorcised Other who did not play exotic music,' writes Taylor, 'but rather played standards which employed familiar Western devices that signify the exotic.' Pandit was an Other who played the music of the Samens, music that staged authenticity for people from other places."

In its introduction the book's Sydney-based

editor Philip Hayward berates academics for ignoring musical exotica. On reading this my first reaction was to relish the delicious absurdity of a gaggle of academics, armed with their bibliographies, Webographies and upturned footnotes per page, descending belatedly on the lives of Martin Denny and Yma Sumac. Clearly they wouldn't be pecking over these illustrious corpses if it wasn't for the recent, strange revival of interest in lounge music and exotica. But in this instance, the well-judged footnotes deliver an extra as back to a mostly thought-provoking book.

Appearing in the wake of David Toop's *Exoticism: Imaginary Soundscapes In A Real World*, *Widening The Horizon* is a sensible gloss of Exotic water next to Toop's clipped map of exotism. The two books may start with the same subject matter, but Toop's determined non-academic treatment is an intuitive and wide-ranging personal descent into what he calls "this murky pool of fabulous misunderstandings and repellent explorations." For anyone intrigued by this music, the books complement each other well.

Hayward sets out a clear chronology: exotica's popular first wave (1930s to mid-60s) is covered by essays on Korta Pandit, Les Baxter, Yma Sumac, Martin Denny and Arthur Lyman. Exoticist applications of exotica in the 1970s and 80s are represented by Horacio Rosenthal's pre-Yellow Fly Orchestra solo recordings and Van Dyke Parks's *Taipei Rose* album. The mid-90s camp revival is also dealt with, and the anthology closes with a piece on

Yanni, a contemporary Greek-American New Age artist who performs spectacular events at exotic locales like the Acropolis or the Taj Mahal. Yanni is a kind of Korta Pandit for the late 90s, with his resolutely non-specific music coloured by djembos and orchestras, and his holistic healing message.

At the heart of the book are Shuhei Hosokawa's illuminating essays on Hosono and Denny. The Canadian professor Rebecca Leydon is another academic very much at home in the cocktail lounge, as it were. Her fine piece on Les Baxter and Yma Sumac does not only with why composers steep themselves in exotism, but also how they achieve it musically, and interests the discussion back to the Orientalism of 19th-century composers such as Verdi (Aida) and Debussy (Lolite). Leydon draws a parallel between the 1950s and the turn of the century, "when exotism and primitivism seemed to go hand in hand with the musical avant-garde and with an unprecedented technological revolution."

Whether you see Les Baxter as a lightweight or not (he scored the 1965 movie *How To Succeed In Love*), Denny's plenty to get your teeth into in Leydon's essay. For example "Arguably, exotism was one of the primary means by which functional tonality was dismantled at the turn of the century." Never mind the large brasses on the LP sleeves — it could be time for a careful re-evaluation of Baxter's *Mus: Out Of The Moon and Zambou!*

CLIVE BELL

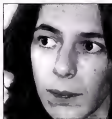
Writing On Drugs

By Sadie Plant

FABER & FABER POK \$9.99

Sadie Plant's title is one of those semi-modern academic puns that ultimately fudge far more than they reveal. Writing on drugs? She means the archive, not the day-by-day experience of keeping your lines going while your credit line is running out. Even though there are clubbers and dopeheads here, they are all gentlemanly writers — Cocteau and Pichoux and Burroughs (no women at all!) — because Plant is far more concerned with what writing capital can be made out of drugs than anything more experiential. The post-Dorinda take on 'drugs', then, text not temperament, reading list not warning list.

This may be a measure of how much society has changed — not that more drugs are being done by more people, but how many more books are being written. Pop goes the pharmacopoeia! In the space of 30 years drugs have gone from devil's scourge to syllabus topic; their legal status may remain the same, but in the meantime they've become a bookshop niche. We're at drug fairs now. Even if we've never touched them. We take their temperature, take a position, take flight, take an awayday. Transposing ride it may be high time to 'do a Foucault' and wonder — as he did with sex — whether drugs are more talked about and written up than done, whether their fascination lies as



much in the production (or inattention) of discourses as the procurement of fun and suffering. In that sense *Writing On Drugs* is one more indication that we'll go on way too far without really going anywhere at all. It's nobbled in advance (like a lot of similar books) by its sense of its own righteous trespass — as though its mere appearance is going to cause some kind of ferment of reassessment. In this it is truly dangerous, because a) the market can barely hold another drugs book, and b) there are far better books out there.

If Plant had written a book about why there's currently so much discourse about drugs, it might have been more head-knocking. As it is she's just assembled another body bristling with lists of the usual suspects — De Quincey, Proust, Burroughs, Foucault, D&G (Deleuze & Guattari not Dolor & Gabbard) — which only serves to remind you how good those people were, and

MS Brunner-Schwer with Oscar Peterson: "We'll do it any way!"



how full current academia is of careful, poised writing that risks nothing of self-exposure and unearths nothing of uncanny resonance and merely over-quotes the usual suspects. Instead of thinking a lot, Plant plays the dodgy polka-man and quotes one more source (including far more acute recent sources such as Hank Kuhn and Simon Reynolds), she ends up quoting from someone else's book about Foucault, at which point you wonder why she didn't just assemble a compilation of other people's writing and have done with it.

I was going to give Plant a kinder, more ambivalent reading, mainly because I'm a voracious old autodidact (echoes addict!) who's done far too many drug books for his own good. Hey, maybe Plant's reference span would open a few neophyte eyes? But then a new book fell onto my desk, and I saw clearly at last that was missing from Plant's context, posturing, miserly tale. Is this really the woman who wrote the sublime *Zeros + Ones*? The only explanation is that her own heart was in *Zeros*, whereas only her agent's was in *Drugs*! How To Stop Inner Heron From A-Z by Anne Marlowe (to be published by Virago in October) is concise, radical, contrary, knowledgeable in a deceptively subtle and coolly 'feminine' way, it's like A Lover's Discourse of addiction, and in certain single-page sections Marlowe spins more paradigm-busting ideas on the head of her stylus than Plant manages to clear in a whole book. Without fully endorsing Anne Marlowe, she recovers the two poles which currently twist drugs, the academic and the confessional. It turns your cosy assumptions (pro or contra) about drug mythology (private or public) right around.

Aural Rorelli's Crack Wins is another 'drugs' book worth tracking down. Plant briefly ruminates on it, as she should, because it's basically the template for her own these writing considered as a parallel form of addiction. But Rorelli's book occupies a

different stratosphere in terms of both its thought and expression: a strange flinty jewel of a book which meshes with your speed of thought: a spectral drug of a book which works in unaccountable ways. Plant is strictly as-the-crow-flies, she contents herself with a chapter per drug, and you can almost see the Penick going back to tick the right authors instead, drip drip drip, a kind of Academic Water Torture ('Oh GOD NO not another Deleuze/Guattari quote') until it becomes one of those books so clogged with grossly apposite quotes that you wonder why the author is avoiding finding their own voice. And what it is they're avoiding. She glances against fascinating areas, but keeps veering away there's a hollowiness at the heart of this book which is really disconcerting. You never feel Plant is fully in her own text, and when we get to what should be the payoff final chapters she seems to lose heart/direction utterly and shrugs us into a dead end of facts, figures, statistics. War on Drugs, we're off on (tobacco, caffeine) drugs, Alan Blum. The 'conclusion' feels tacked on, clumsy, nowhere. It feels academic — in the worst of other, quotidian sense.

Plant's book could also be considered safely academic in a more nefarious way. Looking at the 20th century you could do a 'drug book' on almost anything — drugs and gender, drugs and crime, drugs and poverty, you name it. That Plant has chosen something which allows her to sit at her console with her favourite books, and build the usual self-referential walls — to risk nothing, research nothing new, wrench nothing else — tells you far more about the state of academia than it does drugs. Writing on drugs is one thing, but writing on writing on drugs — the cut begins to get a bit. And if Plant expected a deal like this to alter our fractured perceptions, she knows even less about drugs than it appears.

IAN PENNIE

Jazzin' The Black Forest: The Complete Guide To SABA/MPS Jazz Records

By Klaus Gotthard-Fischer

CD REVIEW LIBRARY H&R 05/99/03/04/5

Founded in the early 60s by Hans George Brunner-Schwer, grandson of the radio pioneer Hermann Schwer, MPS was a pioneering jazz imprint whose roster included both local German talent, such as Joachim Kühn and Volker Kriegel, and a wide range of internationally known musicians, ranging from tradecoreists such as Oscar Peterson to avant-gardists Cecil Taylor and Don Cherry. Many of its original releases have become serious collectors' items, and the label itself has acquired status among today's jazz dance hipsters.

Having recently issued the inevitable MPS compilation album, *Crippled Dick Hot Wax*, a company more usually associated with obscure anachronistic soundtracks, moves sideways into publishing to produce this lavish book, containing a history of the label, interviews with Brunner-Schwer and his most famous producer, Joachim-Erns Berendt (Germany's own 'Pope of Jazz'), full colour reproductions of all the label's 700-odd record sleeves, and an ultra-detailed discography.

For the committed fan, it's a wet dream. The other 99.9 per cent of the world might enjoy the gorgeous sleeve art — MPS was one of the first labels to incorporate modern art into its designs — but the text is written by a fan study for other fans. Like everything else in the study netherworld of jazz collectors, it's basically a labour of love. Gotthard-Fischer is a professor at the University of Duisburg and the book is full of the kind of dry, factual detail that betrays its origins in a paper submitted by him to the university's Audiolibrary. *Phonediscography*. Only occasionally does he seem to get personally involved in the subject,

waving lyrical over Oscar Peterson, dismissing the church organ as a jazz instrument, or highlighting the cynical motives behind many of the vocal groups recorded by the label. Even as he makes his matter-of-fact way through the different types of music the label released, however, it's impossible not to be impressed by MPS's sheer depth of talent. Joe Henderson, George Duke and Archie Shepp all released records under the MPS logo, but Ornette Coleman and Herbie Hancock, incredibly, were among those who failed the Brunner-Schwer entrance exam.

Undoubtedly the best parts of the book are the interviews with Brunner-Schwer and Berendt. Both come across as completely unpretentious bastards. Brunner-Schwer cites his own sound engineering as the vital ingredient in the MPS success story. Berendt claims to have it but invented World Music with his 'Jazz Meets The World' series. In his defence, Berendt displays some humility, acknowledging the importance of his peer's influence. Brunner-Schwer, on the other hand, seems to be more interested in his studio than the people recording inside it. Ganging by the artists who passed through it, he must have been a hell of a producer, because he comes across as one loathsome human being.

PETER PHILLIPS

21st Century Revolutionary

By RU Srus

REVIEW CD REVIEW H&R 05/99/03/04/5

Whatever happened to smart drugs? Diddos? Those big, cumbersome VR helmets you used to see everywhere? Face it, the fun went out of cyberpace round about the same time the 'gee' economies went belly up. By 1996, as Tim Leary lay quietly dying on the Internet, Nick Lesner, a true cyberpunk, was doing hard time in a Singapore jail, having run up debts on the international futures market in excess of one billion US dollars. Looking back, those heady, happy days of the early 90s seem to have taken place in a different century. Give them a few more months, in fact, and they will have.

RU Srus used to be editor-in-chief of *Phuture 2000*, a glossy West Coast technoculture that was among the first to chart the strange new collocations that were occurring between the digital, the chemical and the radical at the start of the decade. It was thanks to Srus that the terms 'cyberculture' and 'new edge' were brought into existence to describe the whole phenomenon. Then things started to turn corporate and ugly, the new electronic frontier slowly became part of what Srus now describes as 'the United Gates of America'. With Microsoft and Wired magazine in the ascendance, New Gingrich and the Republican right were free to co-opt digital technology as a new axis along which society could be divided. Today, as Srus points out, more than 60 per cent of the American people "are either unemployed,

unemployed, working temp or working without benefits or job security." Meanwhile 95 per cent of the populace claims to be "middle class." Boy, are they in for a surprise.

This small volume of essays, interviews and encounters involving historian and prankster Sius makes for curiously departing reading, not simply because the socio-economic prognosis is so bad — when was it ever that good? — but because the author's constant cussing and cyber-apocalypse lingo get tiresome beyond words. A few pages in, it quickly becomes clear that the man has issues. What he doesn't have, he reminds us, is his own PBS television show, a lucrative speaking tour, or an album out on Trent Reznor's Nothing label. However, the guy still knows how to have a few people over to party, and it's the guest list that almost saves this book.

Kathy Acker in San Francisco, enthusing over Blame Kill! boozing parties and "girls going down on girls"; back in 1993, is a reminder of just how much fun she could be. William Gibson on the subject of *Australian hi-tech machine guns and 21st century assault rifles* is also worth catching. Mark Dary and Erik Davis pound their respective ideological fetters with care, invoking Marx and ancient wisdom in about equal measure. Star of the book is undoubtedly internet-age high roller and Gatefold Dead lyricist John Perry Barlow, who comes across as outstandingly gracious, informed and amusing. The man's psychic bandwidth is amazing. Whether describing his experiences lecturing the CIA on data science in Washington, or recalling Bob Dylan's bratty behaviour at Jerry Garcia's funeral, Barlow demonstrates an extraordinary warmth and gentle objectivity not given to many. He even expresses some well-informed sympathy for Gingrich and the FBI.

An extensive interview with Don Joyce and Mark Haddon of Negativland gives the background details to the media feeding frenzy that resulted from their throwaway press release implying a connection between the

group's music and 16-year-old David Drom's axe murder of his family in Minnesota. No such link actually existed, but it didn't stop the press and TV from informing each other that there was. The results of this self-replicating haze can be heard as part of the "Helter Skelter" Negativland sound collage. "Unsettling Stupid"

The only thing that stops this book from working is Sius himself. Despite additional help from such previous collaborators as St. Aude, Stephen Baran and Phobos 2000 "semiotricks," Queen Plus 21st Century Revolutionarily still blows. By the look of it, Sius obviously belongs to the old school of "zine publishing, in which freepressed transgressive radicalism is thought to express itself best through the use of bad English and even worse graphics. And just how difficult is it to spell the names of Georges Bataille, Tristan Tzara and Lynette "Squashy" Fromme correctly, anyway?

A personal account detailing the creative and ideological mapping of cyberspace written from the perspective of the late 90s is a sound idea, and it's great to see those educated vandals and enthusiastic culture hackers at Belgium's *Fingertone* magazine expanding into book publishing. But this is one project that definitely shouldn't have been left with the author.

KEH HOLLINGS

Sound Figures

by Theodore Adorno
STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS Pbk 39.95

Routinely denounced by the diluents of youth, media and cultural studies as elitist — a useful scapegoat for people whose own publications are riddled with insider jargon and footnoted obscurantism to professional privilege — Theodore Adorno is actually one of the few writers to grasp the dynamics of musical creativity. For those who believe that musical experience is a gateway to truth, but who prefer historical and scientific rigour to mystical

assertion, Adorno is the perfect guide: an antidote to the enthusiastic rationalism of trendy theory (music as surrender to Chaos, the primordial Other, the all-dissolving Flux, etc.).

For Adorno, "sound figures" — the musical material worked on by those who make music — are a sedimentation of social content. Music is not a pre-existent set of abstract relations gradually uncovered by rational progress, but a knot in the development of human relations. To deal with it comes a responsibility, orientation as to the whole of history. To those who wish to separate off music as a specialised — and ultimately trivial — pastime, Adorno's approach is anathema. He raises political issues but without burying artistic distinctions under sociological thoughts. He unsmiles the way in which human institutions — from the sonata form to the discotheque — are actually historical products, susceptible to criticism and alteration. A refugee from the Nazis, he discerned in appeals to primal myth the shabby economic interests that put Hitler in power.

Adorno's writing is difficult because it's active, not because it's boring. It battles with signs that sabotage potential understanding of what merely is, that interrupt the expected and turn the glare of reason on the reader. The object of thought is never severed from the concerns of the thinker; his reflexive act achieves a poetic simultaneity of vision which is the opposite of the tidy departments of orthodox academics. If you've ever wondered why magazines that treat jazz as a distant realm of sapa-tinged excellence are so tedious, Adorno comes up with the answer: "Judgments on the internal tension and legitimacy of any artistic practice have always been made possible only by the relation to current — and advanced — production." That's why discussions of Miles Davis and John Coltrane in the context of electronics, free improvisation and World Music have been made possible only by the mere recital of dead fact is pointless, for Adorno, anything true is alive with invention and controversy.

"Sound Figures" is a collection of essays, radio talks, and lectures from the latter half of the 1950s, though you need to refer to the painstaking bibliography in Max Haddison's Adorno's Aesthetics Of Music to source where the material comes from. This edition's lack of dating is criminal. Far from being someone whose ideas float in an eternal think-tank stamped "philosophy," Adorno has determined things to say about both music and society.

The 1950s was a period in which American capital reshaped Europe in its image. By an ideological sleight of hand, communism — which had been an ally in World War Two — was turned into a "totalitarian" menace equivalent to Nazism. Criticism of capitalism was much safer by association with Soviet communism. The recent Jadasson Political editions in New York and London served as a reminder of one strand of Cold War propaganda: the use of strategies derived from

Dada and Surrealism (both strongly linked to the revolutionary left in the pre-war years) to underline the "free" nature of market capitalism. Stalin incorporated modern artists in psychiatric clinics, the CIA encouraged bankers and tycoons to buy their pictures. Rather than heralding the workers' revolution, post-war modern art became a badge of elitism.

That is precisely what concerns Adorno in these discourses. Far from being the zivil proselytiser for high culture depicted in the average Routledge student guide, Adorno questions the notion that, in a society based on inequality and exploitation, liberated music can serve a particular class. True, he's miserably opposed to any dumbering down of the musical advances made by Arnold Schoenberg and the serialist school. He argues that retreats to tonality reek of concession. He argues from a vision of what society might be (enlightened and self-defining), denying that it is the task of the privileged to mensurate a less-enlightened mass. One suspects that it is this revolutionary purity — rather than "elitism" — that offends a generation who disbelieve in resurrection in the 60s, but are now reconciled to positions of privilege made a "spectacle" they once promised to smash.

"The public, at large is always better," says Adorno, "than those few who appeal to popular taste with the criterion of thwarting the emergence of music worthy of human beings." Anyone who has argued with record company personnel or arts administrators will recognise Adorno's targets: careerist pragmatism, refusal to credit subjective reactions, projection of stupidity onto the public, acceptance of class division. Adorno is allergic to the hierarchical view latent in marketing statistics, society seen from the point of view of capital. Anyone committed to the productive spark of artistic form will derive inspiration from his polemic. Those out to exploit the residue of artistic movements (music by employees, style guide journalists, PR smoothies, cultural studies analysts) will surely find Adorno a nightmare. Despite — or because of — an almost psychotic inability to deal with any music that mediated his attention as a commodity (no honourable exceptions for anyone!), Adorno's polemics have the destructive character of seismic cultural turns. If bebop or punk or free jazz needed a philosophy to express rage against recuperation and exploitation, this is it.

When Adorno described the Abba as "a condition that loses its justification as soon as it ceases to be provocative and instead sets itself up as a positive standard", he had already — in 1958 — pre-forecast easterners' Pans, experimentation after Gagarin, Pop Art and Saatchi's Serrano. It's sad to think that the secure term "avant" has been subverted to quarantine Adorno from the very people who need him most. Adorno makes the all too solid crust of society as ideal rather than as the waves of phony rebellious conformism recede, the shadows seem shallower than ever. Who will make the Gaze Sharp?

KEH WATSON

Negativland: geek chic



multi media

Kodwo Eshun

listens to the movies at Melbourne's Cinesonic



Above and opposite: David Shea at Cinesonic.

Nowhere near enough has been said about sound and music in cinema. Science uterance has been made of the weight of music, the character of voice, the smell of atmospheres, the presence of effects. Philip Brophy's introduction to *The World Of Sound In Film*, the book from last year's inaugural Cinesonic event in Melbourne, Australia, purports the absence that this year's second international Conference on Film Scores and Sound Design set out to redress. Organized by Brophy, a curator, composer and lecturer familiar to Wire readers for his groundbreaking *Secret History of Film Music* feature series, Cinesonic brings together practitioners and theorists, composers and industry pros for a unique four-day event.

From 8-11 July, sound designers such as Randy Thom and François Hudon, composers such as David Shea, sonic theorists such as Joseph Loss, Claudia Gortman, Evan Eisenberg and myself, all convened to present music and papers at Story Hall in the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), where Brophy lectures in the Department of Media Arts. Built in the mid-90s, Story Hall's glowing green crystalline skin is unmissable, a polygonal proto that exudes from Swanton Street in central Melbourne. It's a bright Saturday afternoon when I present my paper on Hye Williams, creator of digitally enhanced videos for Moby's "Hysterian" Elliott and Timbaland, but the Lecture Hall is packed with artists, musos, students and multimedia types

The Conference aims to open communication lines between sectors usually unaware of — and indifferent to — each other. The ultimate objective for RMIT's Media Arts grads is to infiltrate the moribund Australian film industry, stirring up business as usual with new ideas brought from Toru Takemitsu and Walter March.

At the talk I am going on and spinning off at RMIT, the lecturers are all artists, the students are ambitious, experimental. When I arrived, the video Brophy shot for *Honeycrack* (aka David Hoberfield, a Techno producer and Media Arts grad) had just been banned.

On Saturday night, on the second floor of a downtown club called the Lodge, Brophy and Philip Samartzis, another composer based at RMIT, who invited Bernard Parmegiani to Melbourne and worked at IRCAM last year, play a futuristic supersynthesised Techno-funk set with Hoberfield under the name Phoenymack. Cinesonic could never happen without Brophy's fearless, often loud impatient intelligence. Since the early 80s he's been a jumpy mover in new Australian culture, moving between the worlds of anime, soundtracks, electronic music, curating and design, with a restless energy that equals parts nihilism and utopianism.

Brophy's lectures are enormously inspiring. At Cinesonic 2, he premiered a new concept — the onephone, the camera that prowls the landscape, guided by the microphone, vision played by sound. Cinesonic opened with Randy Thom's relaxed talk on designing movies for

sound. As designer and re-recording mixer for movies such as *Starship Troopers*, *Contact* and *The Right Stuff*, the laconic San Francisco-based Thom works with multi-channel speaker systems. A protégé of the great Walter March, he began his career back in the late 70s, designing sound for *Apocalypse Now*. Coppola asked several composers for soundtracks, he revealed, including synth pioneer Pat Gleason, without telling any of them about the others, then used the sequences he liked. This explains the Sortant-esque moments on the soundtrack and makes you wish Gleason could release the entire suite.

Friday's presentations included the French theorist François Thomas's fascinating analysis of Orson Welles's techniques of sonic and spatial discrimination in *Times At Midnight*, *F For Fake* and especially *The Trial*. Claude Gortman, the translator of GARY member Michael Cheon's great book *Audiotrack*, brought *The Voice in Cinema*, her brand new version of Cheon's close hearing of Tati, Bresson and De Palma, along with her. Armed with a Roland synth, briefly singing motifs into the mic, the scholarly, funny Gortman played along to film clips from *Starzooka* to *Dances With Wolves*, following Hollywood's wearily decades of fake-out Native Indian scores.

In 1968, Evan Eisenberg's pioneering but hard to find collection of essays, *The Recording Angel*, opened up the implications of photography by studying the effects of

Godard himself. Still, by ending on Catherine Deneuve lying through his ferns of Dennis Lee's *Panorama On Overlook*, Philip provided the day's most sumptuous, regal moment. For many, Shea's Saturday night performance was the Conference's high point, bringing sampladic sound and montaged vision together in an ear-bewitching event. Like his onetime mentor John Zorn, Shea thrives in film edits, applying onerotic logic to sound it's not a question of bringing them together, he insisted afterwards, the two are already connected. Seated at an ordinary sampling keyboard with a Hong Kong movie montage playing behind him, Shea triggered enchanting quasi-jamaican tones. These, he explained later, were samples from a Thai exorcism ceremony, the first sounds in the gorgeous cultural variation of *The Red Chamber*, a solo arrangement from his 1995 CD *The Power Of Mirrors*. He followed this with a new piece, *Sufiyoun*, based on Petrus's silences and absolutely contemporary youth, and encased with a sampladic Carl Saling piece which compressed all the superposed Looney Tunes sounds you've ever heard into one four minute blout.

Shea was a loud speaker, more illuminating than some academics, his exciting answers were only matched by the author Joseph Lanza. As a fan of his books *Endless Music* and *Groovy*, I expected to hear the camp, rather mannered voice of his prose. Putting the entire hall under perfume by brining the atmosphere with his



recording, repeatability and fictional spaces. In the intervening years, the bearded donnish Eisenberg worked on *The Ecology Of Eden*, a massive inquiry into the mythical landscapes of post-Enlightenment nature published last year. Suffering from protracted jetlag, his presentation exorcised sectors from his tome, but proved disappointingly static.

Moving into the auditorium, with its resplendent ceiling, I sat with David Shea, listening to recording François Hudon elaborate on his onetime collaborations with Godard. Clicking through excerpts on a huge screen, the periphrastic and brutal audio-ethnoscapes of movies such as *Passion*, *Not Mary* and *Detective* compelled all over again. It was also inspiring, Philip, pragmatic and blunt, couldn't really elucidate the thought processes of these sumptuous anti-soundtracks, for that you'd need

mood music. CDs, Lanza's presentation on Supermarket Soundtracks, while familiar in its details, seduced with its sharp phrases — "Tina-memory lane", "telling secrets" — and passionate delivery. Unsure and dapper, Lanza is actually an across-the-counter revolutionary. Revisiting *Music* is the first step in his covert mission to transmute taste, reverse value systems, training people to be back and love consumer society. For the next 30 minutes Lanza was

locked in argument with the audience who pecked at his desk, demanding precision with an uncanny enthusiasm.

At last year's Cinesonic, people wanted more industry composers. This year there were two panels — six Australian composers, including Gareth Vanderhorpe, sound designer on *Rambo* and *Jules*. And without exception, everyone considers about his creative business. But Brophy's thinking ahead: next year he plans to invite Hong Kong movie composers, Bollywood composers, the great Japanese anime designers. Like all the artists I met in Melbourne, he's drawn towards East Asian cinema, bored rigid by the Frenchophile emphasis of most soundtrack theory. "There's where the action is," he insisted, his lean face posed between a smile and a snarl. □ Cinesonic Website: www.mediaarts.melb.edu.au/PB_PBrophy/Cinesonic99.html

GO TO:



Captain Trip

www.mtd.xoscon.net/jp/~cptrip/egs.html

Tokyo's self-styled "small label with the big heart" has finally established itself a heartbeat on the Web. With Ken Matsutan at the helm, Captain Trip has established itself as a purveyor of oddity named Japanese rock (Marble Sheep, Gyates, Brown Nose, Screw Bonkers), Euro Prog classics (Amon Düül, Can, Cluster and Guru Guru related material), and reissues of forgotten countercultural classics (Blue Cheer, Yoko Ono), plus new "official" releases by the surging Noul member Klaus Dinger's La'Nou? project. "Unlike most companies," says the blurb, "Captain Trip pays all artists, so when you support the label you are directly supporting the people who make the music you love." The site contains a full mail order catalog, with CD packshots and a small but growing list of links.



Coil: The Solar Lodge

www.brainwashed.com/coil/

Coil might be one of the most mysterious entities in the post-industrial wilderness, but the group's official Website, hosted by Brainwashed, is remarkably revealing. It does all that a fan could wish for: news items are updated ritually every month by the group themselves; it is the first (and often only) source for obtaining rare Coil recordings by mail order; it gives generous amounts of MP3 sound samples; and it is riddled with articles, interviews and reviews alongside suitably arcane links and comprehensive biographies of permanent and floating Coil members.

BOB YOUNG

HOUSEWARE EXPERIENCE

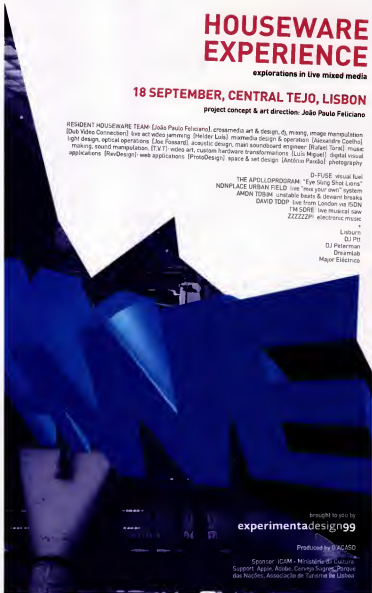
explorations in live mixed media

18 SEPTEMBER, CENTRAL TEJO, LISBON

project concept & art direction: João Paulo Feliciano

RESIDENT HOUSEWARE TEAM: [João Paulo Feliciano] crossmedia art & design, d, mixing, image manipulation [Dub Video Connection] live act/video jamming [Helder Luis] multimedia design & operation [Alexandre Coelho] light design, optical operations [Joe Fossard] acoustic design, man sound/record engineer [Rafael Toral] music making, sound manipulation, [TMYT] video art, custom hardware transformations [Luís Miguel] digital visual applications [RevDesign] web applications [ProtoDesign] space & set design [António Pardo] photography

D-FUSE visual fuel
THE APOLLOPROGRAM: "Eye Sing Shot Lora"
NONPLACE URBAN FIELD live "mess your own" system
AMDIN TOSIM unstable beats & deviant breaks
DAVID TDDP live from London via ISDN
TMSORE live musical saw
ZZZZZZ electronic music
+
Lisbon
DJ Pitt
DJ Peterman
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on location



Going live: festivals, concerts, clubs in the flesh

WOMAD

UK: Timorag Rivermead

Since the first event in Shepton Mallet in 1992 WOMAD has always celebrated the great variety of the world's music as a natural fact. This year was no different, cramming 50 acts from 30 countries into three days of intense activity.

Friday kicked off with Kobayakawa Sugan, a predominantly female 16-piece Taiko drumming group from Hiroshima. What they lacked in precision, compared to other Taiko groups such as Kodo, they made up for with material that somehow combined the musicality of Max Roach's percussion ensemble (TBloods with the groove-savvy of The Temptations' "Papa Was A Rolling Stone" or Isaac Hayes' "Theme From Shaft"). Their tightly choreographed set on the festival's main stage featured introduced models and costumes with kitschy dance routines, but these strange interludes didn't detract from the music's power.

Normally an allergic reaction forces me to recoil when I hear the words, "Everybody put your hands in the air!" It is my imagination or are audience participation rituals becoming increasingly common among acts on the main stage? Among the prime audience-pleasing offenders this year were Zap Mama, the Belgian female vocal troupe with roots in



Kobayakawa Sugan

Cameroon. Since I last saw them in London a few years ago the group have teamed up with Menu Dibango's backing band, thus shifting the focus away from what made them good in the first place, ie their enlivening a cappella harmony singing.

Like most festivals, there's too much to see, so the WOMAD, encircled by the tendency to bounce from one stage to the next, catching a fragment of a performance before moving on to the next. Over the course of the weekend I saw in passing the koto maker and teacher Masashi Kasuya from the Gambia in an intimate workshop setting, the hot, young Colombian dance group Asere in the

Left: Femi Kuti

fluorescent, mobile-featured Sam tent, an imbue vocal troupe called Imbue from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe on their first tour outside Africa, and the light but enjoyable Bulgarian village folk band Xendis in the Rough Guide Dome tent.

The best way to counter this sense of drift was to settle in the Village tent, which seemed the most likely place to catch some WOMAD highlights. In Malaysia no one goes out when Anren Ahmad is on TV. She has played a key role in reviving respect for indigenous traditions in an increasingly Westernised country. Here she presented one long, incense-soaked traditional dance drama based on *slat* (a ta chi-like martial art) and shadow puppetry. The best thing about it was the soundtrack produced by her terrific three-piece group, which combined the slow melodic pulse of gamelan gongs with complex, fiery cross rhythms on *gonggong* (double-headed drum) and an ecstatically discordant *serunai* (a Javanese-like pipe).

Sree Shakti are an all-female Indian classical ensemble mixing the Karnatic and Hindustani traditions. For this performance the group's core percussion trio was extended by violin, voice and veena. The more hostess players deferred to group leader Anuradha Pal, a pupil of Zakir Hussain, who gave the impression that she expected the audience to



Sree Shakti's Anuradha Pal

swim at her every gesture. In such a context, the privileging of the self over the divine was a little distracting. But the performance contained some great soloing over complex, tall time signatures from Latha Ramular on *Krivaram* (thrum drums), Sumyo Ramgopal on *ghatam* (water pot) and the unnamed but wickedly bluesy veena player.

Tuvalu's Vei Kha were described in the programme as a mix of "thooms throat singing, shamanic drums and guitar power chords". In terms of the group's instrumentation, that meant they patted frame drums and the koto-like *lei kha* against drums, kit, bass and guitar or songs whose subject matter spanned odes to mountains, beautiful women and popular uprisings against Tuvalu's

Mongolian feudal rulers. Not unappealingly, a few of their songs chugged along like the theme from *Raiders*. But their greatest asset is golden boy! Adyona Sovok, whose control of the whirling overtones and sub-bass drones that are the steady-state of the throbbing seemed effortless.

The fact that such fusions are happening even on the remote steppes of Tuva is surely a sign of the times. And while cross-cultural mixing is virtually inevitable, the resulting fusions don't always produce much music of distinction. But focusing on fusion musics is one way for multicultural events such as WOMAD to bypass the more difficult problem of how to present traditional music divorced from its original context in any meaningful way to Western audiences.

As for as the French-Moroccan group Diffusion are concerned the fusion route is definitely an unsatisfactory solution. I swiftly abandoned their set when they switched from traditional Gnawa trance music to dodge takes on rap and reggae. Dirty Afro-Celt Sound! Systems mix of Irish music and raw culture—as a live event this set collapsed inside their digital circuits.

The full-on live presence of the Irish group Kila put Afro-Celt's performance in some perspective. Composed of a rock rhythm section, acoustic guitar, Uilleann pipes, penny whistle, plus a pregnant violinist and a densely collected bodhran player, they negotiated the songs' knotty line signatures and simple

without having to do a 15 year study of someone else's traditions, provided that it's not being presented as anything but that. Well, without denying WOMAD's importance in engendering respect for other cultures, it has also raised a host of still unresolved issues about staging World Music. 17 years on, perhaps it's time Gabriel and his associates opened a forum where they can properly be addressed.

PHIL ENGLAND

14th Du Maurier International Jazz Festival

Canada: Vancouver various venues

Given the entrenched cultural chauvinism of the 1990s, it is noteworthy that a gaggle of US jazz critics have sung the most lavish praises of the Du Maurier International Jazz Festival in Vancouver. Arguably, their sheikhs for the Canadian event are as much a commentary on an issue longed by a prolonged, often unkind war for the soul and brandname of jazz. When the Seattle Times' Paul Delmaris declares, "Let's just come out and say it, this is the best jazz festival in the world," he is all but saying "Hello, the war is over, and you—Michael Dorf, George Wein, and your whole sorry lot—have lost." The cause of their defeat is simple enough. The

collist Tristan Hornsinger and bassist Wilbert Da Jacobi, which melded meticulously composed materials and playful improvisations, the problematic placement of 13 Ways with a stylistic spectrum, given the respective credentials of master Fred Hersch, reeds player Michael Moore and percussionist Gerry Hemmings, and the use of "Rimley" as an adjective to describe pianist Paul Rimley's uncooked exuberance (for example, his set with drummer Hun Benarik and bassist Greg Cohen was very Rimley). The development of such conversations in the hot-and-run atmosphere of a citywide festival spreading 4000 events over 11 days was a telling measure of Vancouver's audience bulging success.

However, discussion doesn't always yield consensus. A hung jury greeted several performances that on paper promised a unanimous chorus of approval. Avant garde punts scored on legendary multi-instrumentalist Sam Rivers's trio with Doug Mathews (bassoon, bass clarinet) and Anthony Cole (drums, piano, tenor saxophone), refusing to allow their inability to identify either Rivers's classic "Beatnik", performed as a horn trio, or the Dizzy Gillespie tune Rivers appropriated for "Inspiration", to interfere with their verdict. In the process they missed the larger picture. Naming '76, Rivers is playing with the fire of a person half his age, not only does he still create tracing spontaneous music, he has also mentioned a



Sam Rivers



melodic lines with consummate ease. Likewise, Rait and Christian delivered the goods by integrating a full live group with processed Hiphop rhythms. Double bassist Sirenia and saxophonist DJ Peter Parker produced at least two jaw-dropping duets. The weekend's climax was the UK debut of Pirene Force, the 15-piece group fronted by Felix Kulu's son Rem. Felix Kulu's legacy is one of the most formidable and complex in all music, but Pirene seems more than willing to carry its weight. Under his direction, Pirene Force have a stage show to rival James Brown at his delicious best.

According to Peter Gabriel, still WOMAD's guiding spirit, "It's all right to be naive and enthusiastic about these other cultures



Here and left: Yut-Kin

US jazz festival industry has focused on targeting demographically desirable but underqualified consumers for their title sponsors, while the Vancouver festival has built a community of erudite listeners.

The proof was to be found in the queues for concerts, in the lobbies during intermission, and out on the street after concerts, where the occasionally hair-splitting barrier existed on real musical issues, the legitimacy and efficacy of the confrontational tactics of reeds player Peter Van Bergen's compositions for the Dutch New Music group Looz, the impulse to position composers and non-idomatic improvisers within a jazzcentric context, prompted by violinist Hemmings's String Quartet (with violinist Mary Oliver,

new wave of true multi-instrumentalists in Mathews and Cole. If Rivers grinned too much for his taxes, the punks found needs player Louis Scobie's trio with bassist Bruno Chevillon and drummer Francis Monville dour, if not stiff, and Scobie's compositions academic, in part, the punks lacked the patience for a carefully built set, so the glowing white hair of the trio's performance escaped them. The doctrine of acoustic purity was surprisingly ignored after the trio of clarinetist François Houlié, pianist Benoît Delbecq and percussionist Steve Angeli, and Rogge Jack, a quartet co-led by trumpeter Cuong Vu and keyboardist Jamie Salt. Denizens of the Western Front, longtime news of the Vancouver improvised music

scene, blanching at the former trio's use of real-time signal processing and smacking that the technology enhanced their longstanding investigations of post-Guthrie/Riley chamber jazz lyricism and gamelan-inspired timbres and rhythms was of little consequence. Unfortunately, V's throng singing on one of Rogge Jack's tunes caused even his defenders to shrug their shoulders in disbelief. Despite their wild post-Bitches Brew abstractions, close-order ensemble passages (credit to bassist Skuli Sverrisson and drummer Ben Perowsky), and V's impressive solos, it was his misguided singing that became the banner headline.

The refreshing deconstructed chorons of the Montreal-based Castor Et Compagnie caused palpable consternation, when some perceived the explicit carnality of composer/vocalist/lyricist Joanne Heus's lyrics to be at odds with the pristine romanticism on offer in the second half of the double bill. Featuring trumpeter Dave Douglas's Chums Of The Night Sky (with violinist Mark Feldman, accordionist Gay Kuehnel, and bassist Greg Cohen). Such a response begged the question: Is it the role of opening acts to provide foreplay for the headline? Charge the context and the festively beauteous became the heroes of the moment. In a high-wilicity set of open improvisations with bassist Paul Blaney, the work of Castor Et Compagnie's saxophonist Jean Derome and percussionist Pierre Tanguay was warmly cheered, so too Scobie's, when he reappeared

on location

in a pungent, free-wheeling quarter with Douglas, cellist Peggy Lee and drummer Dylan Von Der Schyff.

Still, several performances got the avant-fundamentalists howling like blues lions. Point Matthew Shop's spoliating duo with bassist William Parker and drummer Susie Ibarra created a rich tapestry from delicate figures, blunt motifs and dizzying sprits. An ad hoc quartet comprising pianist Georg Graewe, Van Bergen, Parker and Ibarra reiterated the merits of fat-out intensity. Reeds virtuoso Vinny Golia reinforced his stature as the Anton Bruckner of American jazz composers with his 26-piece Large Ensemble, the gravity of his meeting extended works was exquisitely counterbalanced by his solo flights and those of ROVA saxophonist Steve Adams and trumpeter Paul Smoker. And tenor saxophonist Tobias Delius's quartet with Hornagers, bassist Joe Wilkerson and drummer Van Benmink simply burned, leaving the audiences with dazed smiles and targeted eyebrows.

BILL SHUPAKER

Hub

U.K., London, Spitz

Ambitronix

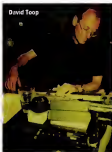
U.K., London, Spitz

With Derek Sakey's Company Week off the English free music calendar for the last five years, these days you're more likely to observe such colossals of musical disciplines in the experimental pop-views of Chicago, Coltrane or Vivaldi. So these two events, bringing loose-fit music improvisation companies to the same East End venue within the same fortnight, couldn't be taken as some kind of necessary resurgence. Hub is an extension of the collaborations Jon Tye regularly convenes on his Lo Recordings label his electronics and shortwave static joining forces with Tom Jenkinson (aka Squarepusher), Richard Thomas, Eddie Prevost, David Toop and saxophonist Tom Chant (who has previously recorded in a duo with Prevost). Luke Vibert, of Wagon Christ/Plug infancy, sits in his turntable and filler. Toop and Prevost are inured to this method, of course. AMM's earliest performances, more than 30 years ago, burnt the chair in similar fashion, soaked in a plasma of deep radio hum, electronic interference and sustained need blowing. Jenkinson's growling (vibes) baritone adds the gutting prod of funk rhythm — an utterly unfamiliar dimension for British improvisers.

Some years ago, Toop and Paul Schubez named this approach a Water Map — tracing a hitherto unrecognized path through a fluid zone that's terminally unchangeable in all three dimensions. At best, it makes for gripping collective music making. At worst, it can lead to an amorphous mess where no one has the courage to take a lead, so everyone ends up posed on the edge of explosion without consummating the relationship. In the event, this first date makes at least second base.



Richard Thomas



David Toop



Squarepusher with Tom Chant

Playing to one of the most packed houses London can field these days, the Hub settles into a sustained thrash from Prevost, Toop, Chant and Richard Thomas, variously fitting between computer and horns. The first half, with the thrash modulated and murmured by various permutations of the Hubbers, is perhaps the most successful — or at least the one in which all participants appear to have an equal stake. This is a period of adjustment and calibration for everyone — since most of them have only just been introduced to each other, the inevitable period of rebreaking leads for much of this set.

Luke Vibert's leadback beats segue into the second half, and he ends up staying for the duration, dropping thick Hip-Hop breaks for the first half hour. Jenkinson spends most of the time crouched in front of his feeding back amp. Tye and Thomas fold in a continuum of hum,

his and nose, with Thomas sampling bleats of his battered baggie. Prevost and Toop opt to sit this one out — there's little space for their nuances, although Eddie does valiantly rattle out snare tattoos as if trying to shove the beast's sharpened points. Gradually the raft comes apart. A stranger, moved by the apparent display of musical democracy on stage, jumps in and pleads for a pull on Thomas's trumpet. The stunt throws the ensemble's concentration, and for the closing 20 minutes, as Vibert starts chucking in some Junglist breaks, Toop sits in dignified silence while Prevost dismantles his kit. An often modulated conversation, crossed wires and all, but by no means the disaster it could have been.

Ambitronix is a calmer affair, with less howling up expectation, despite the presence of Saint Records' turntable maverick, Red Drummer Steve Argüelles' career break in

the electrable Loose Tubes has shifted attention away from his current versatility tonight. His shadowboxes his own rhythms with a live sampling set-up, the rest of it he's due to play in a quartet led by Lou Kontz. French keyboardist Benoit Dubreux and Ashley Slater (aka Dr Bone) on trombone, electronics and occasional vocals add colour and texture, but it's really the interplay of Red's gaggle turntable manoeuvres (Roland Kirk fanfare, whacky voices and scratched-up industrial grind all jockey for position) and Argüelles's stop-starting pechyderm-funk patterns. After the storm-assed clustrophobia of the Hub, Ambitronix are more oceanic, beating against fair winds, if anything, the foursome don't let their ideas develop long enough before each change of tack. Here's hoping more musical landlubbers get priviledged into these ragged crews in the near future.

ROB YOUNG

Hamza El Din

USA, San Francisco Great American Music Hall

For many American record buyers in the 60s, Egyptian singer Hamza El Din's Vanguard releases were the first World Music albums they owned. Today the roving ambassador for the submerged kingdom of Nubia, which was flooded to make way for Egypt's Aswan Dam, might live in Oakland, California, but wielding his oud — the lute of the Islamic diaspora — is a downing root. The singer seeks to share the essence of his lost home wherever he happens to be. Tonight, his goal is to locate it in this former San Francisco bordello.

Hamza moves slowly onstage, radiating serenity. In fact many would have done the relaxed vibe a little. Performing his first numbers solo and off-mic, he parched and purred singing barely makes it past the first few rows, raising fears that he'll be drowned out altogether when his accompanist appear.

However, the arrival of Hamza Naser on hand percussion prompts Hamza to raise his performance and project his voice more audibly. They're joined by Bay Area composer and author WA Patheau at the concert grand, who adapts his playing to Hamza's circular Nubian melodies for a duet that brings to mind Terry Riley's *Harp Of New Albion*. After a pause, Hamza brings on his next guest, Kronos Quartet cellist Joan Jeanrenaud, who protects with Karen Tanaka's "Song Of Songs". Her cello is so highly processed you have to date on her every movement to connect her nuanced playing and the fifth patch into which her cello seemingly has morphed. Though well-played, its appearance on the bill is somewhat mystifying.

The cello's natural timbre is resonant for "A Wish", the title track from Hamza's latest album on Sounds True. Hamza dips into the lyrics of this paean to rain as he drowned village, banishing any concerns about his ability to hold

his own on vocals. This concert performance leaves the record version wanting, with Matthias's perfectly timed yet always surprising piano flourishes echoed on the other side of the stage by Jeannine-Hélène's vocalists and dancers, who, like the rest of the cast, are dressed in white. For the finale, five young men in crisp white trunks and white shirts perform a series of handclapping — when "six consecutive eight-beat cycles produce the 48 beat cycle" — central to a piece called "Naghsat" in his album notes for this piece, Harma cites the influence of particular types of landscape on specific rhythms. Mountainous regions promote accented odd beats, flat realms give rise to walking rhythms, originating in a desert terrain, "Naghsat" combines a bit of both. Ethnic pedigree notwithstanding, the clapping has the feel of a New Music construct. All the same, the audience is encouraged to attempt to spot a cycle, with Jean Harma loudly demonstrating that indeed it could be done. "Naghsat" builds up a head of steam eventually, the men in white holding it together with a bare minimum of deviation from its complex beat pattern. With all the performers joining in, it is an obvious, show closer. Harma picks up a darbuka, looping

from wendo rock cult to serious avant garde artists in a single graceful bound. Tonight's show was originally planned for the Royal Albert Hall, before promoter upheaval forced them back into another cavernous, echoing rock venue. Although the Residents may have made a slight return to their original rock roots (a decision originally cut short by the death of guitarist Philip "Snakefinger" Uhlmann in 1987), the intricacies of their dialogue-driven musical theatre are somewhat lost in the noisy, smoke-filled atmosphere of a crowded London — but this is not the ideal place to fully appreciate *Wormwood* — The Residents' personal pick of "cynical" Bible tales — but as this is their only UK show, it will have to do.

Being a one off show, it is packed with true believers, new converts and curious onlookers. To the synthetic, mocking fanfare of Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Jesus Christ Superstar", The Residents — attired in TV evangelist robes with grey top hats precariously covering their trademark eyeball heads — strike out with a series of muted rock chords that usher in Wormwood's skull-headed master of ceremonies. This sinister figure offers brief explanations of the production's various tableaux, all of which are

blissfully ignorant of the blasphemy happening in front of them. At the tag end of the 90s, religion is the last thing on the collective mind of a UK rock audience, no matter how well it is presented or deconstructed. Not that The Residents have any desire to convert anybody to their own agenda — their ultimate message here is to show that decency, murder and mayhem are aspects of the human condition that can be traced back to Adam and Eve.

The two hour performance culminates with a final rousing chorus of Third Reich 'N' Nazi-style gospel sermoning, as the Skulls swell his tuxedo for a flowing white papal robe and — with The Residents' rockbeat booming behind him — and rips into "That Old Time Religion". The song ingeniously mocks the uneasy pact which the US church makes with sleazy showbusiness to pull in the punters, using Elvis Presley as its most swollen and grotesque as its role model. This fearful, flickering image compensates for the rest of tonight's somewhat cumbersome and frustrating show. With their final state in the dark, The Residents bear their mark, leaving a small scar on the memory of all who showed up to pay homage to their still twisted, still evolving genius.

EDWIN PUGH



Eye eye, it's The Residents

out the same pattern, drifting back and forth across the stage. In this moment he is transformed. No longer Harma El Der, World Music pioneer, Nubian ambassador to the world, consummate label-hopping networker, he is now a village troubadour. Never mind that his village has long since slipped beneath the water, a casualty of progress. His eyes roll back in his head as he becomes one with an intently listening crowd that now sounds as if it were in a heartbeat.

RICHARD HENDERSON

The Residents

UK London Forum

The last time San Francisco's The Residents performed in London was at Sadler's Wells in a theatre setting that elevated their status

visually and vocally accompanied by two beak-nosed and fluorescently decorated phantoms bearing aloft the cartoon cutout head of a relevant biblical character. Viewed from the balcony, the spectacle takes on the aura of a strange, elaborate East European puppet show. Unfortunately, much of the Skulls' barbed comic dialogue about the murderous, mad and somewhat perverse goings on in "The Good/Bad Book" is drowned out by the muffled house PA and the intrusive clamour for drinks at the bar. To anyone not already familiar with the Wormwood album, the stage version must seem unrecognisable and one dimensional. The Residents might have raised the hackles of certain religious organisations in the US with these idiosyncratic biblical interpretations (every one faithfully taken from the original text), but most everyone at the Forum is



Chameleon/Tibetan Monks from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery

UK London St James Piccadilly

Tibet seeped into the Western consciousness down the centuries in a slow drip of reports and rumours filtered. Chinese whispers style, through a line of traders, travellers, emissaries and imperial adventures. The security of hard facts about the closed mountain kingdom permitted all kinds of fantasies about holy lamas, golden cities, horrible cruelties, mysterious peoples and so on, culminating with its Hollywood transformation into Shangri-La. In terms of the place they provide, it's a short leap from Shangri-La to the Holy Kingdom dreamed up by Western seekers to cover holes in their spiritual comfort blankets. That neither of them holds true to Tibet's forbidding

temper or the harshness of Tibetan lives isn't the point. Tibet in the Western imagination fulfils Western needs.

With the present reality of Tibet under Chinese occupation, Tibetans in exile such as the monks of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery have also reconfigured their own Tibet as a state of mind. The depth and strength of Tibetan Buddhism lends its material expression in the miniature Tibet's forming around the monasteries established in Nepal and, in the case of Tashi Lhunpo, South India. The urgent need to raise funds, not to mention raising consciousness about the house arrest of their spiritual leader, the Panchen Lama, in China is why a troupe of monks is on tour. Tonight is a special date at London's St James Church with Chameleon, an ensemble featuring the two fine English countertenors Michael Chance and Robin Seab, soprano Jacqueline Evi, violinist Elizabeth Wilcock, who also plays a Tibetan singing bowl, and Gola Harper on early harp. As Duvetation was formed to explore the healing power of music, the tale with Buddhists performing soul salvation rituals sets the stage for a study of contrasting East-West approaches to matters of music and the spirit.

The one advantage of Tibet as a state of mind is that it travels easily. Wherever the Tashi Lhunpo monks lower their voices to intone their multithroated prayers becomes their home. In their robes and yellow plumed helmets, bearing 12 foot long drum, cymbals, pipes and hand percussion, their entry is spectacular. That the quotidian reality of their monks has been converted into a theatrical spectacle is a disconcerting thought. With no knowledge of its meaning, the only realistic point of engagement for non-Buddhists is as entertainment, good or bad. But as entertainment goes it is undeniably enlightening. From the howling bleats of the mawse during chess, through the monks' deep, chest-rattling rumble of voices, the music is overwhelmingly physical, a paradoxical acoustic mirror manifestation of the monks' circumstance in the moment of prayer, in which state they appear to be there but not there.

Tonight's rituals are interwoven with Chameleon's performances. The latter's first utterance comes from Chance or Seab up in the organ loft or choir gallery (his position and the church's acoustics make a difficult to identify the singer). The way the shimmering taikoetsu notes hover and float down from on high is so otherworldly heavenly that it almost tuns, this non-believer around. Going on to perform in various group settings, a stimulating if unstable alloy of Early Secularised holy minimalism and New Age-in music, their conception of soul belief equates the heavenly with ethereal voices. In comparison, the sub-bass rumble of Tibetan spirituality sounds like it is dredged up from the playing monks' body from the bowels of the earth.

Coming across two tone-voices to salvation in one evening is confounding. The high way to heaven or the low road to nothingness? Non-believers head for the easel.

BARA KOPP

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John Fahey

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- 25 **Belfast** Elmwood Hall 01232 248818
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- 29 **Leeds** Irish Centre 0113 245 5570

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out there

September's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts



Paul Lytton at Baustelle

UK festivals

All Tomorrow's Parties

This gathering of the post-rock tribes on the South Coast is headlined by Torosie. Tinklers, Slaves and Shack. Supporting acts include Arab Strap, Baddy Drown Boy, Bardo Pond, Blonde Redhead, Future Pilot AKA, Gorky's Zygotic Myncy, High Llamas, Laika, Plaid, Pione, Pione, Salskyman, Scott 4, Yo La Tengo and more. Accommodation is in chalets, and as part of the holiday camp vibe, there are shower showers and crazy golf facilities. Camber Sands Holiday Centre, 17-19 September, weekend ticket: £90, daytime 0171 771 2000. Web: www.totterweb.co.uk

Baustelle: Adventures In German Electronics

The best and brightest of the German electronic music community — spanning heretofore minimal composition and electrified improvisation to technocratic electronics — invade Glasgow's leading art space for two weekends. Featured technicians include Achim Welschbach, Christoph Heilmann,

Asmus Tietheers (3 September), Paul Lovens & Paul Lytton, Thomas Lehn & Olaf Rupp (4), Jardin Des Plantes (5), Schmutz Forest, Couch, Tanweer (5), Krieler, To Rococo Rot, Pione (10), and an A-Plus night with FX Random, Schlammerauger and their duo Holobud (11). Glasgow CCA/McLellan Galleries, 3-11 September, £10/£B per night, 0141 332 0522

Homelands

Not one, but two detached all-nighters (in Edinburgh and Ireland) with all of the usual dance music shenanigans. Leading the party animals in Scotland will be The Chemical Brothers, Roni Size, Derrick Carter, All Seeing I, Afro-Celt Sound System, DJ Die and Carl Cox. Meanwhile, in Ireland celebrants include Orbital, Underworld, Breakbeat Era, DJ Dee Andy C, Hype, The Scratch Perverts and Deadly Avenger. Edinburgh Royal Highland Exhibition Grounds, 4-5 September, £36, Ireland County Meath Money Holiday Centre, 25-26 September, IR£44. Tickets for both events 0541 500 044. Web: www.envisionhomelands-uk.com

Instant Music Meeting Vol 6

The sixth edition of the East London season of improvised and experimental music includes performances by London's leading live electronics quartet, 100ish and James Schawler (3 September), Dylan Bates Quartet and Aes Trio (10), John Bisset and Lyndsey Cockwell (17) and Minnow (24). London District Courtyard, Fridays, 8.30-11pm, £4/£3, 0181 469 0536

A Nice Weekend In London

Moving from conifers to baggy skate parts, Matador Records has stayed on top of the times and this month celebrates ten years of eclecticism in fine style. A weekend's worth of concerts stars Skater-Kinney, Soles, Khan, Cat Power and Unwound (3 September), Cornelius, The Anonims and Non Phoxon (4), and Yo La Tengo, Bardo Pond, Mark Bittell, Jaga and The Wisdom Of Harry (5). London ULU, 3-5 September, weekend ticket £40, single night £15, 0171 771 2000. NB: There's a similar event at New York's Irving Plaza later in the month, 23-25 September

Nerve: A 21st Century Happening

Under the benign sponsorship of Sony PlayStation, this annual multimedia arts happening comes to London for the first time. Alongside the video art and installations will be music from Global Communication's Mark Pritchard, Al Hammond & Roger Eno,

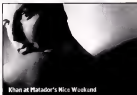
To Rococo Rot everywhere



Richard M Kirk, Kenny Larkin, Bruce Gilbert, DJ Vadim, Luke Vibert, The Scratch Perverts, Palmak, Ian Simmons and New Flesh For Old. London ICA, 24-26 September, 7pm-1am, three day pass £25-£20, single day £10-£B, 0171 930 3647

A Short Season Of German Experimental Music

A three-part month series from Glasgow's Baustelle (see above) infiltrates London's ICA for three days of machine rock, dub and Techno hybrids. Schedule: Krieler, Pale (11



Khan at Matador's Nice Weekend

September), To Rococo Rot (12), Couch, Laika, Gonzales (14). London ICA, 11, 12 and 14 September, three day pass £27-£21, £10-£B per night, 0171 930 3647

Thirteen Fridays Of Secret Music

Primark Park plays host to three months of found sound, improv and electronic weirdness. Kissing things on the hush-hush top will be Arc, Neil Metcalfe and John Rangelotti (3 September), John Bisset, Broth, Doves, Steve Noble and John Butcher (10), The Bloopers and Brown Sems (17) and Garry Todd, Nigel Coombes and The Bohman Brothers (24). London Charters Community Centre, 3 September-26 November, 7.30pm, £4/£3 per night, 01784 481546

Valle Of Glamorgan Festival

Once again, this Welsh festival will celebrate the music of living composers. New works include John Tavener's *Hypocrite*, new pieces for tube quartets by Peter Reynolds and Mat Davidson, and John Pincus's *Parade House*. There will also be works from Endo-Sven Tjuri, Gerard Lewis, Graham Fiken, Peter Scithorpe and Bronus Kussosus. St Donat's, Vale of Glamorgan, various venues, 5-11 September, times/prices vary, 01446 794948

International festivals

Are Electronica 99

As part of this year's global thank-you to biotechnology and the like, Reconnectant 99 99 will celebrate the first end-of-the-world date before the millennium: 9 September 1999. Ringing in the apocalypse, Naut Hamon's Sound Traffic Control live monitoring system will provide a sonic canvas for contributions by Max Master Mike, Meg's Powerbock Orchestra, Olimyo Yoshikida, The Scratch Perverts, DJ Craze, Ivo Pliet, Richie Hawtin. The User's dot-matrix prints, Pole and Granular Synthesis, Austria Linz Ars Electronica Centre, 4-9 September, 9.00pm, fax 00 43 732 7272 2, Web: www.anc.at

Big Chill in Budapest

Bringing the fine art of relaxation to Eastern Europe, the Big Chill crew take over a 400-year-old Turkish bath house: **Mr. Scott, Global Communication's** Tom Middleton, Pete Lawrence and Gilmore will be taking dips in the analogue bubblebath. Hungary Budapest Centre, 25 September. Web www.bigchill.co.uk

Discodesafinado

Second Belgian festival exploring the possibilities of live electronics. Turning out in Turnhout will be Pole, Thomas Brinnmans, Ecomorph, D.J. Gofsther and Chai Reactors. Vledder Delay Belgium Turnhout De Warande, 25 September, 00 32 14 41 69 91

Guelph Jazz Festival

Bringing some of the brightest lights of the jazz/funk scene to this quaint Canadian university town, this festival is into its sixth year. Participants for 1999 include: Han Bennink, Misha Mengelberg, Dave Douglas, Trio, William Parker, Gerry Hemingway, Susie Ibarra, Eddie Prevost, Dominic Duval, Ernest Dawkins and Mark Dresser. Canada Guelph, Ontario, 9-12 September, Web www.guelphjazz.org/jazzfest

Klangspuren

Bringing contemporary music to the Tirol, this year's festival includes performances by The Harned Ensemble, Ensemble Opera Nova Zurich, Radio-Sinfonie-Orchester Frankfurt, Ensemble Modern Frankfurt and the Plüschverein Kammerorchester. A wide range of composers are represented including John Adams, Beethoven, Tatu Takemitsu, Georgy Ligeti, Henz Holger and William Byrd. Austria Schwaz, 11-24 September, 00 43 52 427 3582, Web www.klangspuren.com

Liss Ard Festival

Week long alternative and traditional music: stakeout in West County Cork, Ireland. John Cole, Nick Cave, The Dirty Three and Samuel Beckett dramas all kick off in the final days of August, and the fest continues with Smog and

Lum O'Flann (1 September), Cornelius, Pula, Julia O'Leary and Yungchen Lhamo (2), Jello Biafra, Afro-Celt Sound Systems, Bernard Butler and an acoustic set from Pulp's Jarvis Cocker (3). The penultimate Saturday is hosted by Quirk club Phunk City and devoted to leftfield Techno and live electronics. Carl Craig's Innerzone Orchestra, Cristian Vogel and Jamie Lidell in Super Collider, Pias, Andrew Weatherall, Slickee Scally (4), and Arab Strap, Carl Craig and The Devins close things down (5). Ireland Skibbereen, County Cork, 27 August-5 September, week ticket £250, 00 353 28 23015, e-mail issandfoundation@irenet.ie. Web www.issand.com

Monastery Of Sound

Law & Audio present their second annual electronics retreat in a 12th century monastery in Normandy, Northern France (so you can expect to hear a lot of the "Amen" break). Worshipping at the temple of Roland this year will be Bedouin Ascent, Himmastar Monks, T-Power, Freeform, Apache 61, Osymyze, Sonogobay & Trench, S-1000, b.b. Brn, Trench, Sonogobay & Trench, Paul Thomas, Gay Baker, Force Of Angels and many more live acts and DJs. France Plesnil Abbaye De Blanchelande, 17-19 September, weekend tickets including coach £65, 01 71 642 0508

Sampling Rage

As part of a continuing series called Monday Music, Berlin arts centre Podewil brings in artists representing different approaches to the art of sampling. Manipulating the soundwaves this year will be: Oval's Markus Popp, Steve Rodin, Brandon LaBelle, Christophe Charles (27 September), David Shea, Thomas Demusz, Christoph Heermann/Andrew Chalk, Xantox (4 October), Erik M. Sachiko M. Tene Thawmiz (11), John Will Tiro, Ute Wassermann/Richard Barrett, Amelia Carr/Paul Schatz (18), Germany Berlin Podewil, 27 September-18 October, 00 49 30 24 749777, e-mail pr@podewil.de, Web www.podewil.de

Steirischer Herbst 99

This massive Austrian interdisciplinary festival features an opening concert by Van Dyke Parks, and goes on to showcase a variety of new electronics, experimental music and a day dedicated to Chicago sounds with David Grubbs, John Corbett, Tony Conrad, Fred Anderson's DKV Into, Mats Gustafsson, Ken Vandermark and more (16 October). Two days of events titled "Re-MakeMe-Made", curated by Mike Kelley, explore "secret histories of art, pop and avant garde." The first, "Cross Gender/Cross Genre", rounds off a day of symposia (with Simon Fish, Dedrick Deederichsen and others) with a gig by Tene Thawmiz and Ultra Red (25 September). The second, "Out Housing", has contributions by Kodwo Eshion, Steve Bissard, Jason Stewart, Erik Davis, Simon Reynolds and members of Warwick University's CCRU, with music by

Add N To K, Hallucinator (Chai Reaction) and Matthew Herbert (9 October). The season also includes the European premiere of Robert Ashley's new opera *Quar* (3-5 October). Austria Graz (various venues), 25 September-24 October, fax 00 43 316 835788, e-mail info@stherbst.at, Web www.stherbst.at

Settembre Musica

This 22nd annual festival in Turin covers various bases, from Verdi to Ellington and beyond. In addition to orchestras led by Zubin Mehta and Sir Colin Davis, there will be performances from Cassandra Wilson, Samhro Nantchhyak, Bang On A Can Ensemble and Goran Bregovic. Italy Turin, 5-22 September, 00 39 011 442 4715, Web www.comune.torino.it/settembremusica

Taktlos-Bern

The renowned Swiss Improv festival is back for more international experimentation. Mixing things up will be Granular Synthesis, Fennesz/Dia Bruckmayer, Kaku Matsigami, Anton Bruch, Goldcut, Pole, Marc Rober with Greg Cohen, Joey Baron and Eivind Kang, and more. Switzerland Bern Dampfzentrale, 17-18 September, Web www.taktlos-bern.ch

Warsaw International Festival of Contemporary Music

The 42nd edition of this event brings some big names to the Polish capital. This year, Joan La Barbara performs with Martin Substrack and Robert Ashley, Jacqueline Humbert, Thomas Buckner and Blue Gene Tyranny, John Tibury does Morton Feldman, Bang On A Can do Ellen Fien, and Icebreaker do Frank Zappa and Corbin/Nancarrow. Poland Warsaw Jewish, 17-25 September, tel/fax 00 48 22 831 0607, e-mail festival@warso- autumn.waw.pl

Special Events

Frank Kozik

Frank Kozik is a one-man underground rock industry, designing posters and sleeves for the likes of Sonic Youth, The Butchies, Surfers, Swans and The Gramps. This exhibition of his main body of graphic work also includes a showcase for the Plon's Rum label. London Last Chance Saloon, 20 September-31 December, D171 771 7466

My Eye Hurts

A 12 hour event created by Wark & Lewae International that will feature performances by leading "practitioners of visual art/rock crossover activity." Boundaries will be transcended by Stock,hausen & Welkman's Plant Wand, Laurence Lane, Hayley Newman, Paul Rooney and Susan Philips. Manchester Green Room, 4 September, free, D161 950 5777

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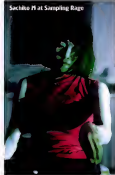
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John Fahey on tour

Jamie Reid

Anti-establishment graphics from the man who collaged together *The Sex Pistols'* album art. This exhibition, *Peace Is Tough*, is a retrospective of works from 1970-99, and catches up with recent work inspired by his youthful connections. Dublin City Arts Centre, to 18 September, 00 353 1 677 0643

Oskar Sala & Alfred Hitchcock

Soprano/tenor inventor/composer Oskar Sala's *Trautonium* provided the soundtrack to Hitchcock's *The Birds* as well as more than 100 other films. As part of the National Film Theatre's Hitchcock retrospective, Sala will be interviewed by Georg Meach and there will be a screening of *The Birds* and his documentary on Sala. London NFI, 22 September, 6.00pm, 01 71 928 3232

Haroon Shamsheer Tribute

Classical Indian musicians and DJs turn out for this East London charity event for a Bink Lee Lane youth music workshop in honour of Jai's Haroon Shamsheer, who died recently. DJs include Talin Singh, Tony Thorpe, Dr Alex Parnes, Sorrow Hill, Jack, Paul Daley, Lethbridge, Headlines, Pandit G from Asian Dub Foundation and composer Ali Nawaz from Fun-Da-Mental. London Brixton Plaza, 11 September, 8pm-5am, minimum £5 donation, 0171 738 5255

What Is Sonic Art?

A day-long symposium at North London's Middlesex University exploring sound and communication from a variety of perspectives. Speakers include Janet Schaefer, Clarence Barlow, Cathy Lane and Katherine Norman. London Middlesex University, 11 September, 12.00, 0181 362 2264

On Stage

Tony Allen Former powerhouse drummer for Fela Kuti appears at the Jazz Cafe's regular global music session, The Shrine. London Jazz Cafe, 23 September, £12/10, 0171 344 0044

Appliance + Rethko Showcase for a pair of London post-rock groups: new Mike signings Appliance and triple-bass troupe Rethko. London Boreham, 29 September, £6, 0171 734 2095

ARC Acclaimed electroacoustic trio on home turf. London Charlton Community Centre (3 September), London Red Rose Club (19)

Rhonda Redhead New York guitar mavericks bring a taste of the Big Apple to Highbury. London Garage, 23 September, £7, 0171 607 1818

Ronnie Prince Billy Will Oldham continues to drag American roots music through the dark recesses of his twisted imagination. London Embassy Rooms, 1 September, 7.30pm, £5, 0171 387 2046

Breakbeat Era Rem Sam's latest live drum and bass project heads out on the road. Norwich

Northern College of Music (18), Newcastle Live Theatre (21), Birmingham Adrian Boult Concert Hall (23), Belfast Brinsford Hall (25), Stamford Arts Centre (27), Leeds Irish Centre (29), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (2 October)

Gang Starr Premier and Guru celebrate their best decade, heading full clip into London with Big Shug, Freddie Foxxx, Marshall Sue and Ali-Ru. London Astoria, 8 September, 010, 0171 434 0403

Instrumental Acoustic faves of the Big Chill set bring their live instruments to the Big Smoke with some help from DJs Ross Allen and Pete Lawrence. London Dringwells, 23 September, 8pm, £8, 0171 771 2000

Weldon Irvine Cosmic keyboard monster brings his talent funkily incantation to the capital. London Jazz Cafe, 17-18 September, £12/10, 0171 344 0044

Ervin Jones's Jazz Machine The polyethnic, powerhouse returns to the UK for a week-long residency. London Ronnie Scott's, 27 September-2 October, 0171 439 0747

Joyce Veteran Brazilian singer whose eclectic pop arrangements paint-inspired Stereolab



Ervin Jones at Ronnie Scott's

Walsworth (28 September), Sheffield Leadmill (3 October), Oxford Zodiac (4)

Cineastice Orchestra Ninja Tune's new multi-player groove outfit, led by J Swireco. London Jazz Cafe, 22 September, £10/5/50, 0171 344 0044

Gorch + Lamb + Gonzales Berlin label KMP-Yo showcases their roster, headed by Gorch's bouncy techno pop and Lamb's sinuous drum 'n' bass songs. Glasgow: Boustelle @ CCA (8 September), London: Upstairs at the Garage (11), Brighton Sussex Arts Club (12), Manchester Band On The Wall (13), London ICA (15)

Dagone Rare UK appearance for American DNY jazz cult sensation along with Glasgow Bill Wells. Glasgow 13th Note Cafe, 3 September, 8.30pm, 0141 553 1630

John Fahey The titan of American primitive guitar comes to these shores for an unrivalled extended tour. Edinburgh Queens Hall (16 September), Manchester Royal

16 September, 7.45pm, £5/3/50, 0181 994 7993

Melt Banana Japanese speed punks pop on the gigs. London Garage, 27 September, £6/50, 0171 607 1818

Louis Moholo's Spirits Rejoice Live debut of new group including Evan Parker, Kerry Wheeler, Paul Rutherford and Keith Tippett fronted by the legendary South African drummer. Hull Truck Theatre, 26 September, 8pm, £10, 01462 323 638

Public Enemy The Hip-hop legends return on the back of their fine new album *There's A Sonnet Goin' On*. London Forum (3 September), Manchester Academy (4), Wolverhampton Civic Hall (6)

Salsaryman + Reboley Analogue synths and stomper post-rock from Salsaryman, with support from recent Mike signings. London Brixton Plaza, 21 September, £7, 0171 738 5255

David Sanchez Eddie Palmieri's former sax player steps out with his Latin Oberlin group in tow, and support from Orlando Poko & Solva Sensation. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 26 September, 7.45pm, £17/50-£12/50, 0171 960 4242

Nitin Sawhney British Asian fusion guru turns in support of his new Outcaste album *The Dance Of Shiva*. Birmingham Ronnie Scott's (13 September), London Embassy Rooms (14), Colchester Arts Centre (16), Bristol Fieldiers (18), Edinburgh Eden @ Cafe Grains (23), Aberdeen Lemon Tree (25), Manchester Band On The Wall (26), Chester Telford's Warehouse (28), Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms (29)

Yo Kaseo Not German sax rock acts testing this scripted site once again. Glasgow: Beatele @ CCA (10 September), Newcastle Comedy Cafe (11), London ICA (12)

Tortoise Its slow and steady wins the race as the post-rock supremos return to the UK for the first time in a year. Manchester Planet K (with Peas, 15 September), London ULU (with The High Limes, 16)

Vivanco The Bear + Babylon

Unpredictable pop madness guaranteed at these Picked Eye Records showcase nights. The Leicester label's lunacy also includes appearances by Pop-Off Tuesday, Sawy Grand and The Freed Unit. London Water Rats (1 September), Manchester Night and Day Cafe (2), Birmingham Flapper & Fink (3), Bristol Louisiana (4), Brighton Oval Festival (5), Glasgow 13th Note (5), Edinburgh ABC (10), Nottingham Bankers Hall Inn (11), Leicester Phoenix Charity (12)

Concannon Wilson Only British concert this year from the great jazz charlatan. London Royal Festival Hall, 20 September, 7.30pm, £20-510, 0171 960 4242

Club Scenes

Funks The usual brew of Electro, House and breakbeats from Smith & Magno, Lou Hammond, Will White and Musgrove. London Mass, 18 September, 9.30pm-5am, £10/16

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1 de octubre. *Auditorio Jameos del Agua*. 21:00 h.
Terje Rypdal-David Darling

2 de octubre. *Auditorio Jameos del Agua*. 21:00 h.
Pierre Favre-Paul Giger

3 de octubre. *Auditorio Cueva de los Verdes*. 21:00 h.
Dino Saluzzi-Rosamunde Quartett

6 de octubre. *Auditorio Jameos del Agua*. 21:00 h.
John Dowland Project

8 de octubre. *Auditorio Jameos del Agua*. 21:00 h.
Terry Riley-Stefano Scodanibbio

10 de octubre. *Volcán del Cuervo*. 19:30 h.
Andreas Vollenweider-Matthias Ziegler

11 de octubre. *Auditorio Jameos del Agua*. 21:00 h.
Alberto Iglesias Ensemble

6-11 de octubre. *Centro Insular de Cultura El Alcázar, San Juan de los Rios*
Exposición Diez Años de Música Visual
Exposición ECA Andalusí Landscapes
Instalación Diez Años de Música Visual

4 de noviembre. *El Alcázar (San Juan de los Rios)*. 21:00 h.
Proyección de Manuelle Vogue de Jean-Luc Godard

7 de noviembre. *El Alcázar (San Juan de los Rios)*. 21:00 h.
Proyección de Tierra de Julio Medem

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out there

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Klunko Ode improv space, this month featuring Will Coddling (2 September), Rods (9), Tony Benin (16), Hugh Metcalfe, Bob Coddling, Jennifer Price (23), Dave Oraper (24) and Alex (30) London: Kinko, Fridays, 9-12, info 0171 800 9200

Kosmische Live post-rock fun from Couch, Pano Maki, Robert Hampton, Jim Jamieson and Horton Jupiter London: Upstairs at the Garage, 11 September, 9pm-3am, \$5, 0171 607 1818

Little Taber At Happiness Film club/tech fest hosted by Pulpi's Mark Webster — expect Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* and cheesy 80s sounds London: ICA, 18 September, 8pm-1am, \$8-14, info 0171 930 3647

Moss Palace Free weekly chill-out session featuring guest DJs and live performances together with hosts Phil Winter, Joss and Protoproton London: Babushka, Sundays, 5-11pm, free, 0171 837 1924

NY Sushi Raw breakfast show from Cockpit, TK and Qandaw (3 September), Mickey from 1101 and QJ Punk Rock (17) Sheffield Unit, Fridays, 10pm-3.30am, \$5/14, 0114 267 1869

Rays Simon Haggis, Pete Lawrence and Isabelle Warner play in celebration of the multimedia club's second birthday London: ICA, 17 September, 8pm-1am, \$4/13, 0171 930 3647 Rays also host a happening entitled 'Girls Need Models', featuring music from London's untapped community of female electronic musicians London: 291 Arts Club, 2-4 September, 8pm-2am, \$7, 0171 207 4094

Seratch A night of folly art rock from America's Madestown His Name Is Alive stable, with Worm Deliver, Princess

Dragonmon, MSBR and Ian Masters' musical sex London: Spotz, 15 September, 8pm, \$6/14, 0171 392 9032

The Spawm 100th edition bash of this cutting edge electronics sorber features Scanner, Si (Cudd), St Elmo's Bob Stanley and Pete Wages, M1 Toric and Nick Luscumb London: Global Cafe, 16 September, 7.30pm-midnight, \$3/12, 0181 568 3145

Subvision Contemporary classical mixes film music meets electronics London: Barok, 4 September, 7pm-1am, free, 0171 916 0595

Vector Eclectic electronics from Bola, Fringe, Geom, Remote Viewer, Team Oyaya and The Wire's own Peter McIntyre Leeds: Cockpit/Todok Bar, 5 September, 1pm-12pm, \$8/17 50

Incoming

The Cutting Edge The BPC's season of new music exploring all facets of contemporary classical, 30 September-16 December, 0171 499 8567

Dracula Screenings of the 1931 movie complete with new score performed by Philip Glass and The Kronos Quartet London: Royal Festival Hall, 23-24 October, 0171 960 4242

Edgeland 90's Worldwide Midwest jazz festival in the home of The Stooges and MC5 Ann Arbor, Michigan USA, 7-9 October, 001 734 760 2099, web: www.kerrytown.com/concerthouse

Leedsbrake Weekend-long celebration of the British contemporary music group's debut in Austria Vienna: MAK, 7-9 October, 00 43 1 544 89 29

Imaginarium New digital art commissions featuring Scanner and Tonne's audio-visual portrait of London London: ICA, 2-31 October, 0171 930 3647, web: www.ica.org.uk

Lanzarote Festival of Visual Music The tenth edition of this unique event, 11 days of Ambient, New Music and modern composition in the Canary Islands, this year including Terry Riley, Gino Segizzi, John Sumner and more Lanzarote various venues, 1-11 October, e-mail: music@visualartfestival.es

PianoWeeks 99 Festival exploring all aspects of piano music London: Blackheath Hall, 20-24 October, 0181 463 0100

San Francisco Jazz Festival 17th annual edition of one of the premier US jazz fests San Francisco, USA, 20 October-6 November, 001 415 788 7353, web: www.sjfestival.org

Teotl That's Totally Out Of Tune, a week of broadcasts, performances and discussions, Hull Timebase, 16-25 October, 01482 216446

Karl Wallz: From Time To Time Celebration marking the centenary of his birth London: South Bank Centre, 3-14 October, 0171 921 0600, web: www.sbc.org

NB All incoming events will be previewed in full in the October issue

Radio

National

BBC Radio 1 92.9 FM

John Peel Tuesdays-Thursdays 10.10pm-midnight The best place to keep up with new rock, indie, Techno, Jungle, Electronica, dub and the legendary sessions

Giles Peterson Wednesdays midnight-2am Up- and down-tempo beats, experimental drum 'n' bass, funk, psychobabble, and plenty more in between

Andy Kershaw Thursdays midnight-2am Raw music and global sounds, including folk, roots, reggae, out rock and more

Fabrizio & Grooverider Fridays 2-4am Two hours of vanguard drum 'n' bass

Westwood Rap Show Fridays 7pm-2am Saturdays 5pm-midnight Tim's fast breaking HipHop

Sarah Cracknell Sundays 4-6.30am Chilled, eclectic sounds from the Si Elvaine singer

BBC Radio 3 90.9 FM

Jazz Century: 1999-2000 Saturdays 6-6.30pm Weekly survey of jazz history This month's episodes: The Blue Note Sound (4 September), Mingus Fingus (11), Social Protest Jazz (18), John Coltrane (25)

Mixing It Sundays 10.45-11.30pm Eclectic mix of new music and discourse from Robert Sandall and Mark Russell

Jazz On 3 Saturdays 11.30pm-1am Modern jazz recorded in session and concert. This month's highlights include: Evan Parker/Paul Lytton/Martin Gimpel (10 September), Steps Ahead (11), Archie Shepp (18), Louis Scialoja and Nils Peter Malmer (25)

Regional

BBC Derby 92.9/93.5/104.5 FM, 1114 MW

Soundscape Sundays 3-4pm Ashley Franklin plays instrumental electronica, contemporary classical systems music, New Age and Ambient

BBC Greater London Radio (GLR) 94.9 FM

Destination In Wednesdays 8-10.30am Ross Allen spins a motley, maverick selection of new music, from spacey jazz and minimalism to electronica and leftfield pop

Charlie Gillett Thursdays 7-9pm Rock, roots, dub, World Music, blues, R&B and more sounds of the city

BBC Lancashire 95.5/102.9/104.5 FM, 655 SW

On The Wire Saturdays 12-2am Steve Barker's freerun mix of dub, experimental electronics, out rock, free improv and more

BBC Merseyside 95.4 FM, 1465 MW

The Late World Countdown Sundays midnight-2am Roger Hill's millennium mix of avant rock, psychedelia, warped Ambient and global gems in themed sequences

BBC Scotland 92.4-94.1 FM

From Setback To HipHop Mondays 8-9pm David Silars drops jazz and new beats

Bat Patrol Sundays 8-9pm Peter Adon plays independent music across the spectrum

Electronica Sundays 9-10pm Marc Perovall airs the latest Techno and dance tracks

Cable Radio 98.0 FM (Dillon Keynes)

The Garden Of Ecstasy Delights Fridays 9pm-midnight Shane Quentel's blend of avant rock to electronic eclectica, with bizarre soundbites

Kiss 100 FM (London)

Drawn To Me Sundays 6-8pm Two-step breakfasts from the London duo

Paul Thomas Sundays 8-9pm Experimental electronica mix

Patrick Forge Sundays 10pm-midnight Eclectic jazz-not-jazz mix

Front and Furry Sundays/Mondays midnight-2am More breakfast that's chills the most

Silence & Friends Mondays 2-4am Jazz, Jungle, cyber-soul breakfasts, electrified grooves from this lively bunch

Colin Dale Wednesdays 2-4am Minimal Techno and concrete House

Swire 107.6 FM (Brighton)

Totally Wired Jazzy 11pm-1am Eclectic selection of leftfield independent/dance tunes laced with 60s/70s feedbacks

The Chill Factor Sundays 5-7pm Dave Creakle's continuous mix of drum 'n' bass, dub, psych-HipHop, classical, improv and electronica

Links to Net radio broadcasts can be found on The Wire Website: www.thewire.com



Out There items for inclusion in the October issue should reach us by Friday 10 September

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ISSUED MONTHLY

epiphanies

Avant guitarist **Alan Licht** learns how to make his guitar erupt the Eddie Van Halen way

Being a DJ is probably a good way to get through adolescence. Being a guitar hero is too, believe me. But either way the competition is stiff. In America the high school rock scene can be a lot like the sports of gunslang: there's always someone who's the best, and someone trying to become "the best."

In 1981, at the age of 13, I was playing guitar in a group called The Fuddruckers. One day the other guitarist in the group played me a tape of Eddie Van Halen's 90-second solo guitar extravaganza "Eruption," recorded in 1978. Generally I was able to duplicate solos by ear, no matter how fast — Clapton, Page, Hendrix, whoever — but the final section of "Eruption" was another matter. What the hell was he doing? A blinding, Paganini-damaged cadenza/bitching, Van Halen's playing instantly exploded the guitar's limits, old standards of "speed" were out the window.

The gauntlet had been thrown down, this was state of the art shit. I had the same reaction ten years later when I heard Kiki Haino for the first time (too bad Haino's never hooked up with David Lee Roth, although it's never too late). Later an older teenage friend showed me and my fellow guitarist how it was

done, two-handed tapping on the fretboard. We both learned how to play "Eruption" note for note. From then on tapping became *de rigueur* for keeping up with the Joneses as a teenage guitar whiz. My counterpart in The Fuddruckers became obsessed with it, and a malady ensued. Unlike him I thought there was more to music than Metal guitar, but he was unconvinced — he threw my copy of the first Clash album at the wall at one point. So we sacked him.

A new group, Shattered Glass, rose from the ashes of The Fuddruckers, and we did a lot of Van Halen covers. I was able to pick out most of Eddie's solos by ear, which earned me high regard at the time. It was determined that the introduction to "Little Guitars" was impossible to play, but I figured it out, same for "Spanish Fly" (the acoustic "Eruption" on Van Halen II). Perhaps most memorable was my replication of Eddie's solo on Michael Jackson's "Beat It," executed flawlessly until the final note which was a half-step sharp (documented on a rehearsal tape from the time).

Of course later I learned about Hans Rechel and Fred Frith, who were doing much more sophisticated investigations of two-hand tapping in the early 70s in

the name of "extended technique." Then Stanley Jordan and Michael Hedges came out with complex chordal approaches to the method, but none of these was as exciting, as significant, as Eddie. He took it to the kids, he did it in the name of speed and flash. "Eruption" had the effect of a souped-up racing car. He stole the crown from the 60s guitar gods, made them — for a time — look out of date. In that sense "Eruption" was punk rock (which he hated). Before Eddie, just running up and down blues scales was enough to make you "good." After "Eruption" it was a whole new ball game, harmonically. It made the solos in "Freebird" sound just as ridiculous as The Grims or The Adverts did. Suddenly you had kids using all the modes in solos, eventually you had groups like Slayer taking totally atonal solos at lightning speed. As a 90-second tantrum, "Eruption" also parallels the punk and No Wave singles of the era. In an interview Eddie said he never structured his solos; they came right off the top of his head. A free improviser and a punk! Even Mark Perry never managed that.

Flash and technique have always been disparaged by post-punk sensibilities, yet growing up, unlike Joe Strummer or Kevin Shields or whoever, I never listened to these guys and thought I could never do that. I always thought I could, and I did. I worshipped guitarists, but in a way I never put them on a pedestal. After all, they had the same six strings and 24 frets that I had — if they could do it, why not me? I never felt limited by anything. Whatever "outsider" playing techniques I've cultivated over the years has been despite my ability to play conventionally, not because of an inability to play that way. I listened to "I Heard Her Call My Name" back then as much as I listened to "Eruption" and I still can't play that solo note for note. I appreciated that in my teens too. And then there's Jeff Beck, who can be noisy, tasteful, melodic, inventive, fast all at the same time, a real inspiration (just ask Lemmy Kaye).

And anyway, what's wrong with speed? Coltrane played fast, so did Cecil Taylor. Bach is fast, Philip Glass is fast. The Bad Brains were fast and totally accurate. Lou Reed was once billed in *The Velvet Underground* as the world's fastest guitarist. When I heard Coltrane it was (on one level, anyway) more guitar heroics to me — only he did it with a saxophone. Absorbing punk rock did not negate having guitar heroes. I remember Henry Kaiser saying how Richard Thompson is cool because he can play sloppy or dead-on precise, and someone like Steve Morse of The Dixie Dregs could only play impressive stuff, which made him less of a guitar player. That really resonated with me. I always found energy and mistakes interesting. I watched a Jans Joplin clip on MTV with my grandparents in Shattered Glass and they were laughing at her guitarist (other Sam Andrew or James Gurley) who was out of tune and flailing away. I was totally into it. That was just as wild as Clapton or Van Halen — not more, not less.

Anyway, once David Lee Roth left Van Halen I lost interest. By that point I was out of the covers group, playing punk rock, listening to Branca, Reich and Eno. When I got to college, being able to play "Eruption" was probably more of a liability than an asset. It was a joke. But I never forgot it. □

Rock steady Eddie



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